

BY COMPTON MACKENZIE

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THE EAST WIND OF LOVE

BEING VOLUME ONE OF THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE

By

COMPTON MACKENZIE

BOOK TWO

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The East Wind of Love

WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR JOHN TO SET OUT TO HIS party he sought a yellow omnibus at the Britannia, Camden Town, which carried him as far as Westminster Bridge where he alighted and walked along in the shadow of the Houses of Parliament toward the Embankment. That expensive pile of Sunday school gothic might stand as the cenotaph of the Victorian era on this night which was the end of it. Coming toward him John saw a solitary figure whom in the shine of a street lamp he recognized as a member of the Cabinet, a favourite target for the shafts of Liberal caricaturists like Carruthers Gould. Parliament was not sitting to-night, and this statesman, whose eyebrows had the tufted diabolism of Bernard Shaw, smiling to himself, it might be, at some sally for which he was fancying he had an audience, was like a ghost revisiting his earthly paradise. An empty hansom passed at the moment. The statesman hailed it, and John heard him give the cabby an address in Mayfair before he sank comfortably down behind the apron with that air of leisure soon to become a lost gesture like bowing with a chapeau-bras. Not that John foresaw the end now. On the contrary he felt irritated by the lack of any sign of such an end in this the first February of the twentieth century, with Queen Victoria in her tomb. This member of the Unionist Cabinet had for him the hideous permanence of one of those trousered statues in the vicinity of the Houses of Parliament. The dreary term of that Unionist Government which was to expire in such ignominy five

years hence had but recently begun. The Queen was buried, but it looked as if Victorianism was to drag on indefinitely, and how should it do otherwise with figures at the helm like that figure in the hansom?

It was the fashion for the youth that was maturing after the Great War to deplore the savourless life to which it was doomed, and in its complaints there was always a suggestion of having been robbed by the older generation of its birthright. The youth that was maturing at the beginning of the century was just as heavily oppressed by what it felt were the security and sameness of existence as the youth that came afterwards was to be oppressed by its insecurity and emptiness. Unless the depth of what was seeming the ever-increasing monotony of modern life be appreciated, one of the causes of the Great War will be missed, and one of the causes of the next war left unassailed. John walking along beside the Thames toward the bleak stucco of Pimlico tried to work himself up to the pitch of hysterical horror he had lately been admiring in James Thomson's alcoholic nightmare poem *The City of Dreadful Night*. A shivering prostitute leaning over the parapet became one more unfortunate whose attempted suicide was to bring a touch of colour into the monotone.

"Where are you going, darling?" she turned away from her contemplation of the river to enquire of John. The bathos was profound. "Wouldn't you like somebody to love you nicely to-night? It *has* turned nasty and cold, hasn't it? What's the time? Half-past eight? What a life, eh?"

John explained that an engagement prevented his accepting her invitation.

"All right, Claude, give me half a crown for my cab-

fare home, there's a love, and if I spend it on gin it won't be your fault "

John had just presented her with half a crown when a Salvation Army lass thrust her bonnet between them

"You're looking for Jesus, dear, if you only knew it," she told the girl earnestly

"Rats to you," she snapped "I'm looking for a nice boy to cuddle me—that's what I'm looking for "

John turned away Norman MacIver Torquil Macleod Herbert Wilbraham Queen Victoria the man who climbed up the tree to watch the funeral Edward Fitzgerald the member of the Cabinet that tart without an overcoat . that Salvation Army lass with her shapeless mouth and watery eyes it made immortality a difficult thing to imagine Immortality? But it was even more difficult to imagine the extent of futility that would be implied without it Immortality was the rub When once a human being were assured of that, it would be imperative to accept the religion which offered the most reasonable preparation for it And when once such a religion were accepted, it would provide the true basis, the only basis in fact for a political creed

Claverton Street, straight and wide and respectable, was reached What had Fitz meant when he had talked about murder here? This was the least appropriate of the grey Pimlico streets for murder What was the number of the house he was visiting? 122 Conspiracy? The Cato Street conspiracy John's heart quickened slightly as he rang the bell of 122 He was a little disappointed to be shown up to a room on the first floor full of young men drinking whisky and stout, fummy with tobacco-smoke and

loud with chatter Fitzgerald introduced him to the host, Joe O'Malley, who was a brawny fellow with cheeks like Bath chaps, and like himself a medical student. John was set down with four others to a game of poker. The glass of whisky at his right hand was kept filled and under its influence he began to play a daring game. In two hours he had won over seven pounds. By midnight he had won fourteen pounds. His pockets were heavy with silver and copper.

"Hell, this must be my last hand. I've got to catch a train across the river at Vauxhall Bridge by twenty past twelve," exclaimed one of the players who had won nearly as much as John and drunk a little more. He was the only one besides John who had sat steadily at the table for three hours. The other players had resigned their places broke to others who in turn had been broken.

"Sixpence to play," announced John, who had been dealt a flush of hearts which floated before his eyes like strawberries in syrup.

"I make it a bob," said Barry Kiernan, the man from over the river, who was as swarthy as the knave of spades and would have made a superb figure in the Gunpowder Plot, but who was actually a bank-clerk in Streatham and preoccupied entirely with horse-racing and cards.

"I raise the ante to six and one. I mean one and six," John announced.

"Two bob," said Kiernan sharply.

The other three players threw in their hands. Let the two winners of the evening pluck each other.

"Half a crown," said John, whose flush of hearts was now beginning to look like a necklace of rubies.

"Hell," ejaculated Kiernan. "I'm standing."

"How many cards?" asked the dealer.

"Hell, I said I'm standing I don't want a bloody card "

"How many cards, Ogilvie?"

John looked at his hand What was Kiernan standing on? Blast it, he might be holding a full house Four, five, six, seven, and jack of hearts He discarded the knave If he broke his flush he would let it go with the loss of the ante What was this? My god, it was the eight of hearts That showed the importance of playing poker when one had had enough whisky to make one a little audacious

"Half a crown to see me," John proclaimed

"Raise you to five bob," said Kiernan

"Seven and six "

"Half a quid "

The betting went up by half-crowns to five pounds two and six

"Damn it, I *must* catch my train," said Kiernan "I'll see you By god, a straight flush! And I held a full hand aces high!"

He swallowed his whisky, paid John in silver, shook hands with him affectionately, and with a shout of 'Good-night, boys', rushed from the room, with not a minute in hand to catch his train

"It's a damn good thing I've won about twenty pounds, Fitz," John told his friend "Because all this tin in my pocket is very useful as a weight I really can stand extraordinordinarily steady with this weight in my pockets I am as steady as the Abbot of Aberbrothock And that's a damned difficult word to say—a damned difficult word to say I don't suppose if you searched the dictionary from head to foot you could find a more damn difficult word to say than Aber—Aberbrothock "

"I bet I couldn't, Judge," Fitzgerald agreed with a grin.

"The only thing I'm a bit disappointed about," John went on, "is that no steps were taken to solve anything at all to-night. Still, I've enjoyed myself where's O'Malley? I want to tell him how much I've enjoyed myself. The good old Abbot of Aber—of Aber—of Aberbrothock couldn't have enjoyed himself more than I have, but I think I'll have to get home pretty soon because I'm very anxious to pay my father back some money I lost at Geneva last summer, and I'm in a p-possession to do it now thanks to this ripping evening which I've enjoyed tre very much."

"Look here, Judge, I'll put you in a cab," Fitzgerald offered. "Because you're bloody drunk."

"It's only the fumes, Fitz. It's nothing except the fumes. You see, so long as I was looking at the cards, I didn't observe the way the fumes were behaving, but now that I'm standing up, and by Jove, with all this money in my pocket, I *can* stand up! I may be swinging about in my head a bit, but my feet are as steady as an elephant's. Yes, the fumes are much more noticeable now. The gas isn't going out, is it? No, I thought it wasn't. Well, there you are. You see the fumes have got into the gas now."

"Come on, Judge, I'll put you in a cab."

John shook hands several times with everybody in turn, and floated downstairs in a mood of profound benevolence which found expression in the somewhat excessive courtesy of apologizing to the newel at the bottom of the stairs for bumping into it.

"Did you tell me, Fitz, that there was a murder in this street once upon a time?" he asked, as holding his friend's arm he walked along Claverton Street with him toward a cab-rank.

"I did "

John was overcome by the absurdity of such a notion. He sat down on the kerb and laughed loudly.

"Get up, you damned ass. What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing at the idea of anybody murdering somebody else in a street like this. The Abbot of Aberbrothock would laugh at that. Look at the houses! They're the most respectable houses I've ever seen. Which number was the house where the murder was?"

"I don't remember "

"That's because you're drunk, Fitz, and it's nothing to be proud of "

"Get up, you ass "

"It's becoming questionable if I shall ever be able to get up again. You don't seem to realize that I've got about thirty half-crowns and thirty florins and a hundred shillings and God knows how many sixpences and coppers in my pockets. I'm sitting here like the Inchcape rock, and I don't believe the Abbot of Aberbrothock could move me "

But a minute or two later a hansom approached and John was persuaded to make an effort to rise and get into it. Fitzgerald drove with him as far as Victoria Station where he left the cab to catch a train to West Kensington.

John by himself became indignant with the length and ugliness of Victoria Street. As the hansom jogged on between the tall houses, it seemed as long and as ugly as the Victorian era. By this time the Johnnie Jameson he had been drinking all the evening was exercising its full effect. Fancy turned to fact as in a dream. Victoria Street became the Victorian era from which he must escape. He pushed up the trap in the roof of the hansom.

"I'm getting down here."

"But hadn't you better let me drive you where your friend said you wanted to go?" the cabbie demurred

"I'm getting down here," John repeated firmly The hansom was nearing a turning that led toward St James's Park The driver pulled up It was none of his business if the young fellow wanted to play the giddy goat And when he had been paid five shillings for that short drive from Claverton Street he felt more sure than ever that the business of his fare's behaviour should rest upon his own shoulders

John set out northwards, and presently came to the bridge over the lake in St James's Park, to that bridge where, night or day, one may feel nearer to the heart of London than anywhere

St James's Park St James's School, Buckingham Palace in the haze of this quiet February night loomed as impressive as once upon a time for him had loomed the bulk of St James's School St James's School! And but for his father's marrying again he might still have been there The ghastly reflection brought a dankness and a chill to John's forehead He vomited with beautiful accuracy into the lake and a moment or two later was able to feel the exhilaration of being drunk without physical discomfort, in which condition he agreeably skimmed the shell-strewn surface of the path on his way across the deserted park In Birdcage Walk he fancied that a policeman was regarding his birdlike progress with disapproval There was the perfect Victorian figure Yes, he might still have been at St James's School instead of walking across St James's Park like this (or was he flying?) if his father had not taken it into his head to marry again

"It's all right, Constable, I'm not really drunk."

"That's right, sir, but I should make for home if I was you "

"The trouble is, Constable, that owing to the haze I cannot see the North Star, and therefore I may miss Hampstead and find myself back at St James's School, which would be extremely unpleasant, for I have no wish whatever to find myself back at school "

"But your best plan is to keep right on past St James's Palace into Pall Mall, and if I was you, sir, I'd take a hansom there "

"But I've just got rid of a hansom in Victoria Street, Constable, owing to the damnable resemblance between Victoria Street and the Victorian era of which you are the chief contribution to civilization according to my friend the Abbot of Aberbrothock who is my familiar spirit tonight "

"Well, I hope you won't let him get too familiar, sir "

"No, I'll take care that doesn't happen But would you think I was getting too familiar if I invited you to drink the health of the Abbot of Aberbrothock on a future occasion? I happened to win quite a lot at poker this evening, and I should like to offer you a little souvenir of the Victorian era in the shape of the late Queen "

"Thank you, sir," said the constable, looking round as he accepted the half-crown, to see that there was nobody at hand to misjudge the courtesy "And now, sir, I'd like to see you safely out of the park In fact I'd like to see you safely into a hansom "

"No, no, Constable, I must walk a little more first My father is in the habit of working late sometimes, and I shouldn't like him to think that my friend the Abbot of Aberbrothock was anything but perfectly sober."

"Just so, sir, but you want to be careful with that money you're jingling about in your pockets. There's some queer characters about at this time of night."

John wandered on along Pall Mall and thence up Regent Street into Piccadilly. From time to time a feminine hand plucked at his sleeve and a voice, Cockney or French usually, proposed dalliance. He had been so steadily deaf to these voices, so indifferent to those appealing fingers that he could not understand how he suddenly found himself seated in a hansom beside a huge woman whose hat seemed to spread over his head like a tree. He was even more surprised when she began to address him in German, so much surprised that not until the hansom pulled up at a house in a mildewed terrace somewhere off the Marylebone Road was he able to explain that a mistake had occurred.

"You not with me come home? Why you make me a fool? I give you love, *nein*?"

"Nein, and neither I nor the Abbot of Aberbrothock speak German. Here's ten shillings for you."

He heard the golden coin tinkle down upon the pavement and jumped back into the hansom.

"Where to, sir?"

"What's the time?"

"Just gone two o'clock, sir."

"Drive me to Swiss Cottage."

Clip-clop Clip-clop Clip-clop Clarence Gate Clip-clop Clip-clop Clip-clop Lord's Clip-clop Clip-clop Clip-clop St John's Wood Road Clip-clop Clip-clop. Clip-clop Swiss Cottage

"Here you are, sir. Quite all right?"

"Quite all right, thanks."

The driver drummed upon his chest gorilla-wise
"Turned much colder to-night Did you see the last of
the old lady?"

"I was in Hyde Park "

"I missed it myself Well, I suppose it don't do to say
so, but I think she'd been running long enough A
change'll do a bit of good all round That's my idear any-
way Now we shan't be long, as the saying is Sure you're
quite all right, sir?"

The cabbie's last question may have been prompted
by the three half-crowns which John had handed to
him

"Quite all right Good-night "

"Good-night, sir And thank you "

The driver shook the reins, and the hansom turned
back to the road by which it had come, leaving its fare to
walk up Fitzjohn's Avenue, the effect of which was just
the reverse of what John had expected Whether it was
the sharpness of the Hampstead air or the effort of walking
uphill, his head was going round much faster by the time
he reached the dignity of Church Row It was going
round so fast that when he looked up at his house and saw
the light in his father's library he decided to walk on
toward the Heath in the hope of sobering himself He sat
down on a bench beside the road near the pond, and in the
way that a sleepless man will seek sleep or a tipsy man
sobriety he set himself a mental task which on this
occasion was to recall where he had been and what he had
been doing in every February for all the years of which he
could keep count

February 1900 This time last year How far away it
was! It had been when everybody was thinking that the

British Empire was in actual danger and when it had been proposed to save it with the City Imperial Volunteers and the Imperial Yeomanry He had considered running away from school to enlist It had been when he and Emil were beginning to grow really intimate A single year ago

February 1899 The Upper Fifth at St James's Cray's form Monroe's *Homeric Grammar* Buttmann's *Lexilogus* Bits of *Maud* into elegiacs Bits of *Enoch Arden* into elegiacs Bits of *The Lotus Eaters* into hexameters Demosthenes Dust

February 1898 The Middle Fifth Lemaire's form Lemaire pacing the class-room floor like a swan gliding backwards and forwards over the water The Sixth *Aeneid* Or was it the Fourth *Aeneid*? The Fourth, of course Lemaire had called Dido a monumentally tiresome woman Lemaire with flowers always on his desk and lavender-water on his handkerchief and a roaring fire in a grate instead of those filthy hot-water pipes which infected all the other class-rooms in the school Lemaire had been a great joke on account of his effeminacy and ridiculous affectations, but he had had a jolly good notion of teaching Latin Yes, he had diffused upon his class-room an air of civilization One of the people with whom it was a pleasure to read Horace

February 1897 Upper Fourth A Caryll's form Amusing enough The *Ion* of Euripides Cicero *Pro Milone*

February 1896 Lower Fourth Majoribanks Dull Majoribanks had a beard You couldn't ever rag in a form when the usher had a beard P1, as well as dull

February 1895 Lower Third Foxy Braxted Square

bowler Tight pin-striped trousers Sardonic wit, but genial

February 1894 Randell's He must have been in Vernon's form The Oxford and Cambridge boat race At least practice for it but not yet on the tide-way Everybody wearing dark-blue swallows or light-blue swallows in their buttonholes Oxford always winning Skating on the Round Pond Or was that in 1895? Or both years?

February 1893 Wagstaff's form His classroom door had glass panels There were only two like that at Randell's

February 1892 Heavy snow Great snowball fights A cut over the forehead from a snowball with a stone in it The scar was still there It must have been that February when he and Scott struck their blow for liberty

Looking back over these last nine Februarys it would seem that the only real sign of life he had ever given was in that February when he was nine years old There had been a giant's-stride in a corner of the playground of Randell's, that old mulberry garden which once had been a wide prairie and had shrunk to nothing last time he had revisited it The giant's-stride stood behind the big pear-tree, beyond it a wooden paling separating the playground from a market-garden John was once again rushing out in the eleven o'clock 'break' to bag a rope and go slithering round the gravel with a dozen or so other small boys Somebody discovered that, if you took your rope round all the other ropes, when the others started you were carried out to swing deliciously through the air at right angles to the post This was called a 'ride', and during the break each of the small boys in turn was given a ride by the efforts of his companions This procedure had been

watched by one of the fellows in the Modern Class, louts all of them who stayed on at Randell's till they were sixteen or seventeen, feeding like fat pike on the four hundred troutlets under fourteen. The Modern Class had been abolished before John left Randell's, and when it went the bad bullying went with it. God, it *had* been bullying in those days! Worthy of *St Winifred's*. People talked about *Eric*. But *St Winifred's* was a better school book. The worst bully of all at Randell's had been that long swine Gollock. Yes, Gollock. Gollock cramming twenty kids in through the trapdoor in the old stable and shutting them down in a dark hole where they could hardly breathe. Gollock making a stink himself and swearing that one of them had made a stink and hauling them up one by one out of the hole and forcing them to choose between chewing up a lump of mud and getting a dozen laid on as hard as he could with a cat-o'-nine-tails he had fashioned from some old reins. He and Scott had refused to eat dirt for Gollock and they had been skinned for it. He could see Scott now in his old-fashioned braided broadcloth suit with tight breeches, and he could hear Scott's voice telling Gollock that he'd go to hell before he ate dirt for such a clown as him. Scott's accent, the only Scottish accent in the London school, had been the very accent of Liberty herself. And it was he and Scott who had overthrown Gollock, that long greasy swine. Gollock had taken it into his head to make the kids give him rides on the giant's-stride, not only in the break, but from two o'clock to five and twenty past two every day before afternoon school. Gollock had bagged all their tops too in that term of tops. He had even bagged some kid's peg-top with heart of ebony and mother-o'-pearl, and the kid had wept so

bitterly over his top that he had been sick in the classroom And Gollock had threatened to bag all their marbles too when next term came with marbles Indians Blood Alleys Glassies Commonies Gollock would bag them all Gollock in fact had enslaved some forty or fifty of the smallest boys in the school and made their life a continuous misery and incessant tribute likely to endure until he left Randell's

"Look here, Ogilvie I'll no' let that clown make a fool of me any longer Are you game to join with me?" Scott had demanded

"Harmodius and Aristogeiton!" John proclaimed aloud to the Hampstead night in which he was sitting in search of sobriety

Not a word had they said to the others, but next day both had requested from their form-masters permission to leave the room at half-past ten Out in the deserted playground, they had crept cautiously past the lav to the giant's-stride and with a Norwegian knife severed most of the strands of the rope, the handle of which Gollock in his pride had marked with his own initials G G, the rope from the end of which he used to soar round the pole while a dozen galley-slaves toiled for his pleasure And at the break half an hour later they had mustered as usual, poor slaves, not daring to defy the tyrant Gollock had gone soaring round about half a dozen times when the rope parted Gollock had soared over the wooden paling and landed in a cucumber-frame in the market-garden to lie unconscious with a broken leg and a face cut all to pieces Gollock had been taken to hospital and had never come back to Randell's The school authorities had forbidden rides in future What did that matter? The tyrant had

been laid low And Scott had died of some fever a month or two afterwards Had Scott lived, the years after 1892 might not have been so prosaic February 1892, that was a date

And February 1891 A black, black month, the month in which his mother had died John looked uneasily over his shoulder at the dark Heath in the three o'clock silence and chill Were the dead aware of the life they had left? A poor sight he would be to his mother at this moment

February 1890, 1889, 1888, 1887, 1886, 1885, 1884, 1883 no doubt he was always with her in those Februarys They were a single February Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat firelight flickering over the flowery pattern upon the walls, over the daisies and the columbines in his mother's own little room, over the golden daisies embroidered on her warm brown velvet dress And her voice reading

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat whose names are five sweet symphonies Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen, Margaret and Rosalys

John rose from the bench and walked back to Church Row The light was still burning in his father's library He considered creeping past upstairs to bed without being heard, but decided against it Anyway, he wanted to pay back the money lost in Geneva

The barrister was still at his desk when his son came in "Hullo!"

"Hullo! Where have you been?"

"I was at a party of some friends," John said, with what he supposed was a masterly deliberation of speech which would suggest an evening of unimpaired sobriety

"Enjoy yourself?"

"Very much We played poker And I won about twenty pounds I thought I'd like to pay you back that money I lost in Geneva "

John concentrating intently on clarity of enunciation allowed himself to be careless in other respects, with the result that in trying to get out the loose silver in his pockets he dropped most of it on the floor

"I'll count it I want to pay you back the exact amount," he insisted as he started groping round the library on all fours for the coins

"You'd better leave it to-night," said his father "And I think you'd better get off to bed You're a little drunk "

"A little drunk?" John echoed

"Yes, get off to bed I've still half an hour's work to do on this case Don't forget to turn out the gas in your room "

Many witnesses had walked down from the box at the Old Bailey after a long cross-examination by Alexander Ogilvie with that feeling of having been turned inside out with which his only son now went off to bed

"But how the deuce did he know I *had* been drinking?" John asked of his reflection in the wardrobe mirror

In the morning John noticed that Watson was staring curiously at something on the floor of his room, and asked her what she was looking at

"I'm looking at your clothes, Master John "

"What's the matter with them?"

"There's nothing the matter with them I never saw them folded up so neat before But whyever did you want to leave them on the hearthrug with the coal-scuttle on top of them?"

"The coal-scuttle?" John repeated in bewilderment

Watson held up the utensil

"If you don't believe me " she began

"I was looking for something, and I must have forgotten I'd lifted the coal-scuttle "

Watson sniffed loudly

After breakfast Alexander Ogilvie called his son into the library The money John had won at poker was stacked in heaps of silver on his desk

"Twenty-one pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence," he said "I'm not sure whether money won at cards be the best foundation for a banking account, but you earned it yourself, and that is in its favour Anyway, I want you to put it in the bank I had been proposing to give you a quarterly allowance of twenty-five pounds until you go up to the University in October, when of course that will have to be considerably increased You will now have forty-six pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence at the Loam branch of the London and County Bank I shall pay in twenty-five pounds on April 1st, and a further twenty-five on July 1st Here is the first cheque You will pay it in yourself and find out from the cashier how to write a cheque If you are anxious to drink and gamble you will within limits be able to gratify your inclinations without being under the embarrassing necessity of asking me for the necessary cash "

"I shan't drink and I shan't gamble," said John

His father looked at him sharply

"Capital! I rather fancy that's a fair resolve But mind you, John, it's not a promise to me I'm not anxious to hamper you with sentimental obligations You'll have the income from your own money when you come of age, though the capital won't be yours until you are twenty-

five In fact you will have the income from your money when you go up to Exeter ”

John went back to Milbourne that afternoon Before he left he had a talk with his stepmother

“Did you hear I’d made rather an ass of myself last night?”

“No, John, did you? What did you do?”

“Well, I got rather tight Father was awfully decent about it ”

“Was he? I *am* so glad, John ”

“I think he’s a good deal more human since he married you ”

“Oh, he was always very human ”

“Or perhaps I’m growing more human,” John added
“Look here, Elise, you might tell him that I thought he was awfully decent, will you?”

“Be sure I’ll tell him ”

While the dingy train made its slow way from Liverpool Street toward Loamshire through the slums of the East End John thought how appropriate it was that such a hideous squalor should infect the approach to London from this direction Here was the symbol of a purely Saxon England He turned away from the backs of mean houses, from the broken panes of windows through which pallid children and harassed women gazed incuriously at the snorting train, from the empty window-boxes waiting for the flowers from penny packets of seed, from the tattered washing in back yards, from the roofs and chimneys and

public-houses at the corners of festering streets, from the evidence of degraded poverty which made the British Empire a brassbound mockery of goodness, truth and beauty. How could people talk of patriotism and allow those slums to continue? But that was part of the falsity of Victorianism. And another part of its falsity was the relation between human beings. He had had to ask Elise to convey his appreciation of his father's attitude over last night. Had he attempted to do so, it would have embarrassed his father no less than himself. If his mother had lived, would he by now have been as remote from her? And in their relationship with each other did his father and his stepmother always place a barrier between them? Was it still possible to love as people loved in poetry? So much seemed to be vanishing with progress. Did every mechanical gain rob human nature of some equivalent power in itself? It was the dread of that effect which inspired people like Fitz. But to believe that material progress was a delusion involved a fearful pessimism about life unless one were assured of a life beyond this one. And if one were assured of that it would be the duty of such a creed to fight against any form of material progress which benefited only a portion of humanity. Faith? Was it faith to pray for faith? On an impulse John knelt on the dusty floor of the empty third-class compartment. He directed his desire for faith toward that so indifferent-seeming divine muteness, and when he rose from his knees he half expected to see Christ sitting in a corner of the carriage as Mr Herbert Wilbraham had assured him. He was in the habit of doing. There was nobody. Nevertheless John felt that his sudden gesture had not been absurd. There was a kind of warmth in the compartment, and

looking out of it he saw in the window of a degraded house three children laughing and waving to the passing train. Their yellow hair was fluffed out like the hair of the angels of Benozzo Gozzoli. Riding out to Milbourne in the filmy dusk John felt that the leafless winter trees and hedges had never been so much alive.

Drill with the company was a corrective to the emotional thinking of the last month. Pacey-Foote had gone back to Oxford. Meade was down with influenza. John with the help of the non-commissioned officers and the goodwill of the men handled A Company like a veteran. Orders came for the battalion to line the streets of Loam for the solemn proclamation of King Edward VII by the herald in the presence of the Mayor and Corporation. It was a white-kid-glove occasion, a scarlet-and-silver-lace occasion, a parade-Wellingtons occasion. All of what Dr Johnson called the 'reference to futurity' was set aside in order to cope with the need of getting the company into position under the eyes and within earshot of Colonel Haviland himself.

"Keep cool, sir. You're doing fine," whispered Colour-sergeant Capstick. "Ease 'em off a bit now, sir. You're doing fine, sir. Captain Meade couldn't have done it better."

At this moment the right flank of A Company some fifty yards away was seen to fall back in some confusion. The commanding officer and Sergeant Capstick hurried along to find out the reason.

"It was the police, sir," explained Corporal Sowerbutts indignantly. "It was the Inspector ordered us back."

John felt that his career as a disciplinarian was again at stake. If he accepted the right of the police to order the

military about he should never be able to give another order himself

"Why didn't you refer the Inspector to my orders, Corporal?"

"Well, sir, I would have done if Inspector Blencoe could ever listen to anybody excepting himself"

Corporal Sowerbutts might have added that as recently as last Saturday night he had had some experience of Inspector Blencoe's inability to hear the other side when arguing with him about the number of beers he had drunk

John ordered the half-company to number, and then brought the first twenty men a couple of paces to the front. The line had hardly been re-established when back came Inspector Blencoe with two constables

"Come along now, get back there, you men," he ordered, without a glance at John

"Inspector," said John sharply, "you mustn't interfere with my men. If you're dissatisfied with my disposition of them you must see Colonel Haviland and get his permission to ask me to move them further back"

"Come, come," said the Inspector impatiently. "The police are in charge of order in the streets to-day"

"Not at all. If the military are lining the streets, the military are responsible for order"

"The military!" exclaimed the Inspector contemptuously. "First time I ever heard the Volunteers called the military? Come along now, get back there, you chaps"

But this time the Loamshires stood firm, and in their resistance to the Inspector and his two constables there was a hint of that dogged spirit which had made the old county regiments the backbone of the British Army. The

Loamshires had fought with Marlborough in Flanders. They were not going to budge for the Loamshire police.

The Captain of D Company which was lining the High Street beyond A Company came along to see what was the matter. This was Henry Falconer, the only son of Lord Warburton, the biggest landowner round the ancient market town of Stanstead in the northern half of the county where D Company was recruited. Henry Falconer was a tall agreeable fellow of about thirty, the junior captain in the First Loamshire Volunteers, but as the heir to his father, an important figure in Loamshire life.

"In trouble, Ogilvie?" he drawled indolently, tugging at a small fair moustache which for that date was unusually small.

John explained the situation.

"This officer is perfectly right, Inspector," he said. His voice was pleasant, but there was an assurance in it which warned Inspector Blencoe that argument would not be welcome.

"Well, sir, the police have a ticklish job to-day," he suggested deferentially.

"Quite so, Inspector. That's why the military have been called upon to help," said Falconer.

This time there was no contemptuous ejaculation from the Inspector. Whatever might be his personal opinion of the Volunteers, he was not prepared to voice it in front of the heir of old Lord Warburton who, as everybody knew, was cracked on the Volunteers and who in his day had commanded this very battalion. He saluted, and with his two attendant constables he moved on to assert the majesty of the police elsewhere.

"So Meade's not here?" Falconer asked.

"No, he's laid up And as Pacey-Foote couldn't get down from Oxford I'm in command of the Company"

"Good man Looking pretty smart too," he added with an approving glance at the die-hards of A Company "Poor old Blencoe doesn't mean any harm, but he can't get used to seeing the lads of the village in scarlet Will Meade be fit enough to join in this affair next week?"

The affair next week was a route march on Saturday to Paxford, a village equidistant from Stanstead, Loam, and Dolby, where three companies of the Loamshires were to meet after a march of about twelve miles

"He may be, but I shouldn't think so," said John hopefully

"We shall have rather a jolly time, I expect You know the Medicotts? Oh, don't you? Well, you'll enjoy meeting them Medicott Hall is a great place, and they always give us a capital do on this annual occasion Rose Medicott is "

But what Rose Medicott was John was not to know at this moment, for there was a stir in the crowd

"You'd better get back to your men," said Falconer urgently "The show's just going to start "

As the Mayor and Aldermen of Loam with various prominent Loamshire figures including old Lord Warburton and Squire Medicott appeared on the crimson-clothed dais outside the town hall the sun burst through the grey February clouds with something like the ardour of spring

"Present arms!"

There was a flourish of trumpets 'Edward the Seventh by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Sea . .

Emperor of India Defender of the Faith
John was too much preoccupied by the need of carrying out his own part in the pomp to observe the omission of 'and First' in the King's title, and there was no susceptible Scot in this heart of rural England to protest against the twentieth-century insult to William Wallace. As it was, the ceremony exhilarated him. At the Queen's funeral he had been aware of history in the making, but there he had been a spectator. On this occasion he was an actor. By asserting the prestige of the military he could even feel that he had influenced the proceedings.

Back at the Vicarage that evening he asked Mrs. Damsen about the Medicotts. Nothing gave her more pleasure than an excuse to expatiate on county families.

"Oh, they are one of our oldest Loamshire families. Mrs. Medicott was a Trotton. The Squire was Master of the Loamshire Hunt until last year. A fine old English gentleman as the song says, though I don't think he is actually yet sixty. But I'm afraid from what I hear that he has lost a good deal of money lately. That's why he gave up the hounds. And they've cut down all their subscriptions to local charities. It's very sad. One hates to see these old families in difficulties. Especially with all this social unrest. Dick Medicott has just gone into the Hussars, or is it the Lancers? I'm afraid that will be another drain. I always say, Mr. Ogilvie, that if only money had never been invented the world would be a much happier place. Well, perhaps Rose will marry well. She certainly is a very sweet girl. She'll be eighteen now. Then there's Ralph. He's at Winchester. Another expense. And then there's Ann, who must be fourteen now. Such a difficult age, but fortunately she's at school. And so

you're going to Medlicott Hall on Saturday? Ah, here's the Vicar George, Mr Ogilvie is going to Medlicott Hall on Saturday "

"With my company," John added "We're meeting the Stanstead and Dolby companies there "

"Ah, I've been to some glorious breakfasts at the Hall," Mr Damson sighed "The Squire was the finest M F H they'll ever see in Loamshire It was a terrible loss to the county when he gave it up Well, well, I've given up hunting myself now *Eheu fugaces* and the rest of it By the way, Ogilvie, about this idea of yours to read this fellow Ibsen in a German translation You might come along down to my study and talk it over, will you?"

Down in the Vicar's study the Vicar himself unlocked a small drawer in his bureau and took out a thin booklet bound in pinkish-brown paper

"I thought when you suggested this for your own reading that it was a very odd suggestion, Ogilvie," he said reproachfully "But I need hardly say I had no idea, no idea at all that it was this kind of literature "

He held the booklet between his thumb and forefinger, upon his countenance an expression of disgust like that of an old maid who had found a packet of toilet paper beside her chair instead of the *Church Times*

"There didn't seem any harm in it to me," said John. "Though I thought it was a bit dull "

"Dull? Nothing very dull about a woman who calmly tells her husband that she is going to leave him and her children because, forsooth, she imagines that she has to live her own life I'm not in the habit of mincing my words, Ogilvie I ride straight And in my opinion this play—this *Puppenheim* thing—is a deliberate attack on the

divine institution of Holy Matrimony Anyway, it's not the kind of literature I care to have read in my study "

John pondered over that study while the Vicar tore up the German translation of *A Doll's House* Nora's husband would have had just such a study if he had been an English clergyman

The two painted shields, one with the arms of Cambridge University, the other with the arms of Sidney Sussex College

"there was a young man of Sid Sussex who thought that $w + x$ was the same as xw , so they said we won't trouble you to remain any more at Sid Sussex

the faded photographs of Sidney Sussex men in whiskered groups before the Franco-Prussian War

of twenty Sidney Sussex men in striped pillbox caps and baggy white breeches presumably the College Rugby team

of an unwrinkled but much heavier George Damson in cap and gown

of twelve young men with earnest expressions and fluffy whiskers outside a Victorian gothic window, the students of St Jude's Theological College

a large engraving of Holman Hunt's Light of the World, no doubt once upon a time considered an audaciously novel presentation of Christ

a large autotype of the Good Shepherd a bad oil-painting of Mrs Damson in a summery dress of the early 'eighties

faded photographs of Windermere and Derwentwater commemorating a honeymoon in the English lakes

a worn Brussels carpet red flock wallpaper

a bookcase of red deal Pearson on the Creed, Westcott on St John, Puller's *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*

a book-rest carved from olive-wood of Gethsemane . *The Treasury of Devotion* . *Holy Living and Holy Dying* . . . Mrs Damson's trowel

left upon the desk when she put the first daffodils in the Vicar's special Crown Derby vase this morning

The last scrap of *Nora oder Ein Puppenheim* was by now burnt out Was it worth such energetic destruction? Mrs Damson would never walk out of this study like Nora

"I know you didn't realize the nature of that poisonous play when you suggested our reading it together, Ogilvie And I blame myself for not having been more alive to the nature of the muck with which that Norwegian fellow is flooding the world However, if you want to read plays in German, and I see your idea in wanting to read conversation, we'd better try something by Schiller"

"There's a modern German dramatist called Gerhard Haupt "

"Now, look here, Ogilvie," the Vicar cut him off, "if you're wise you'll give up this craze for modernity It's tempting, very tempting to fancy that because a book is modern it must be better than the intellectual pabulum which was good enough for our fathers I used to think I was modern when I was up at Sidney Sussex I used to read all the advanced stuff And what would it seem like now?"

"Pretty old-fashioned, I expect," said John "And I dare say Ibsen will seem old-fashioned twenty-five years hence"

"Ogilvie, if the time ever comes when that morbid stuff sounds old-fashioned," the Vicar solemnly declared, "it will be a disaster for the human race No, you misunderstood the point I was trying to make just now The advanced stuff I used to read would seem rubbish now"

"I'm sure it would," John agreed cordially

The Vicar looked sharply at his pupil. For a moment his mind was darkened by a suspicion that his leg was being pulled. He did not mistrust clever youths and he did not mistrust good-looking youths, but on the rare occasions when he had come into contact with youths who were at once clever and good-looking he had always mistrusted them profoundly. The combination was unnatural, and the Vicar abhorred anything he considered unnatural. Still, ever since he had spoken to young Ogilvie about attending Matins punctually every morning at eight o'clock the lad had been present, and from what he had heard of him from his brother officers he was well liked. Perhaps he was not trying to pull his leg. Perhaps that frivolous tone of voice in which he had answered just now was the levity of ignorance. Obviously he could not have appreciated the demoralizing influence of that Norwegian play, or he would not have suggested reading it in public. He would have gloated over it in the morbid privacy of his own room.

"Well, Ogilvie, I dare say you think I've been making much ado about nothing, but I have to remember that while you are with me I am responsible to your father, apart from my responsibility as a Christian priest. In my own humble way I try to walk in the footsteps of my Maker."

"Mr Damson, may I ask you a question?"

"By all means," the Vicar replied, composing his countenance to suit what he supposed was to be one of those flirtations with the confessional in which the most staunchly moderate Anglican was not prepared to see any harm. "If there is anything about which you wish to consult me as a priest, my dear boy, do not hesitate. Do not

feel embarrassed Whatever you wish to tell me is of course under the seal of the con— of confidence ”

The Vicar had by now assumed the right attitude and expression in which to listen to and perhaps unravel youth's perplexities The effect was rather like a doctor waiting for the embarrassing details of an internal complaint

“What I wanted to ask you was whether you really believed in God ?”

“Whether I believe in God ?” the Vicar gasped

‘I mean in the conventional religious sense, with all the rest for instance, do you believe in the Apostles’ Creed literally?’

“Do I believe in the Apostles’ Creed ? Are you trying to be insolent, Ogilvie ?”

“Of course not, padre It’s a question that one asks oneself and in asking oneself one asks it about other people ”

The Vicar’s brow cleared He had been reassured by John’s addressing him as padre, and thus granting his office the respect of men of the world, a respect for one whom they recognized as different from but by no means apart from themselves A gratifying development of late years had been the obviously increasing affection of the laity for the clergy It did not occur to the Reverend George Damson that affection may often be a good-natured manifestation of contempt

“But why ask such a question, my dear fellow ? Isn’t that the fundamental mistake ? The moment we begin asking ourselves questions we are attacking our own faith ”

“But didn’t you ever ask yourself questions ?” John pressed

"Not from the moment I made up my mind to take Holy Orders "

"Have you ever had any kind of personal assurance that what you believe is true?"

"Personal assurance? I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, Ogilvie "

John related his experience with Mr Herbert Wilbraham in the train coming south, but he said nothing about his own appeal for faith in the train from Liverpool Street to Loam, for in questioning the Vicar he was more concerned to gratify curiosity than to search for the help and guidance of spiritual counsel

"Rule that kind of thing right out," advised Mr Damson stoutly "Rule it right out, Ogilvie These emotional excitements are derogatory to the dignity of Almighty God " The phrase was irresistible Mr Damson scribbled it down on the back of his tailor's bill It must certainly be used in a sermon when the Dissenters were being tiresome

"Still it is very strange that God doesn't make things a little bit easier I can't see why somebody who believes blindly is better than the man who demands proof "

"What about our Lord's answer to St Thomas?"

"Yes, and I've been puzzled by that answer since I started thinking a bit about religion It seems to put a very high premium on credulity What is to tell us when faith ends and credulity begins?"

"Surely the answer to that is simple enough The Bible "

"But what guarantees the truth of the Bible?"

"The inspiration of Almighty God "

"But isn't that a kind of mental living by taking in each other's washing?"

"Ogilvie, Ogilvie, that is almost a blasphemous comparison," declared the Vicar reproachfully

"Well, do you believe all that's in the Bible?"

"Emphatically I do, though of course not always literally We must accept some of it as symbolical Science has made great strides, and we Christians must take advantage of what we believe to be God's glorious gift of increased knowledge to humanity "

"Yes, that's all very well, but if God is going to allow all our old-fashioned notions to be swept away, why doesn't He reinforce our faith proportionately?"

"Isn't it a little presumptuous for a young man of eighteen to doubt God's infinite wisdom?"

"It certainly would be if God had ever given me any assurance of His existence," John argued "But you must admit, Mr Damson, that it's much less easy nowadays to believe than it was in the Middle Ages "

"It was much less easy in the Middle Ages for men to believe than it was when our Lord walked the earth And yet even in Jerusalem there were more men who disbelieved than men who believed "

John would have liked to tell the Vicar that he found him far less convincing than a Cockney singing-girl in a Swiss café concert or a beefy man with a walrus moustache and a Lancashire accent in a railway-carriage, to go further indeed and openly impute to his arguments a debilitated professionalism as their basis, but he knew that such an imputation would merely strike the older man as a piece of youthful insolence, and he abstained After all why should he expect spiritual guidance from a man to whom he was not prepared to grant even the mental courtesy of recognizing his sincerity?

"It's this paralysing silence of God," he sighed at last "I expect you feel a little overcome by that sometimes, don't you?"

"We parsons often feel overcome, but we go plodding on," the Vicar replied "Anyway, of one thing you may be sure, God understands our difficulties better than we can ever hope to understand them ourselves And now what about bed?"

The Reverend George Damson yawned He had had a tiring day since he had hurried along the gravel path from the Vicarage to the church to don his surplice and say Morning Prayer There had been that egg-bound Minorca hen which had kept him busy after breakfast There had been that trouble between Mrs Hobbins and Mrs Pennycook over Mrs Pennycook's alleged statement to Mrs Gash that Mrs Hobbins's daughter Annie was going to have a baby, which Mrs Hobbins, with an unpleasant wealth of physical details, had declared to be impossible and therefore a slanderous statement for which she was entitled to have the law of Mrs Pennycook, who was equally anxious to have the law of Mrs Gash for repeating to Mrs Hobbins something which she, Mrs Pennycook, had never so much as breathed even to Mr Pennycook There had been a most discouraging response from his three pupils to a general knowledge paper he had set them, and there had been the problem of deciding whether it was not his duty to write to their parents and urge that the sooner they were removed from his tuition and sent out to the colonies the more truly economical it would be for the parents There had been that uncomfortable business at Greengorse Farm over that half-witted lad in the farmyard and . . he hoped that the police were

not going to take the matter up The wretched boy was more fit for the asylum than the jail Then he had bicycled into Loam, only to arrive two minutes after the accession of King Edward had been proclaimed Several of his brother clergy had chaffed him There had always been a slight jealousy over his riding to hounds, although he had not hunted now for five years 'You haven't learnt to manage the humble bicycle yet,' that effeminate extremist Archbutt had sneered, and there had been a general guffaw Jealousy, just common or garden jealousy They resented his taking pupils and having private means And that play he had looked through after tea so as to be able to do something for young Ogilvie, who after all deserved a little attention A most uncomfortable play Sordid That was the kind of thing they called realism No wonder young people were beginning to have religious doubts However, luckily nobody had read it except himself

"Oh, by the way, Ogilvie, you had a copy of that Puppenheim thing, too," he said aloud "I hope you'll destroy it"

John hesitated oh, well, it would please the old boy

"It's up in my room, Vicar I'll fetch it down"

"No, no, I trust you absolutely Just destroy it yourself"

The Reverend George Damson yawned again

"I'm off to bed If you're going to join the others in the "

"No, I'm tired myself," said John quickly

"I was vexed at missing the proclamation Well, you'll enjoy Medicott Hall on Saturday week March the

ninth, eh? Well time certainly does fly ” Here at least was a statement uttered with profound conviction “Will you put out the lamp, Ogilvie? Thanks ”

The Vicar yawned his way upstairs, John close behind him

“Good night A bit chilly to-night There’s a touch of east in the wind, I fancy ”

Doctor Meade was not well enough to take command on that Saturday, when at two o’clock A Company paraded outside the drill-hall with rolled greatcoats, haversacks and water-bottles It was a good turn out, for this march to Paxford was a favourite event, the beer at the Green Man Inn being renowned for its depth and potency The weather was favourable, the sky a pale cloudless blue and the wind blowing keenly across the freshly ploughed fields and setting the young lambs skipping in the pastures Yet winter was not out of sight by a long way The companies of twittering hen linnets had not broken up The rose upon the breast of their future mates would be deeper before they did

“Looks like being a nice seasonable spring, sir,” Colour-sergeant Capstick observed to his commanding officer “Very good turn out, sir Eighty-one Paxford’s a very pretty village ”

“I’ve not been there yet,” John told him

“Have you not, sir? Well, I’ve heard it said more than once that Paxford’s the prettiest village in Loamshire And Medlicott Hall’s a very nice place On the old-

fashioned side of course, but a lot of people like that I think if I was you, sir, with all respect, I'd give the order to march easy now The Company came through Loam very smart A company of regulars couldn't have come through smarter Pity we couldn't have had the band with us "

When the men had settled down to their tramp of eleven miles, Sergeant Capstick returned to John's side

"Pity Captain Meade wasn't up to this march He'll want to be careful, though, for a bit He's had a nasty turn by what I hear Seems funny for a doctor to be ill, I always think Still, there you are, they're only flesh and blood like what we are ourselves Yes, we all enjoy this Paxford march Squire Medlicott gave us a lovely spread last year in the parish hall Worked it in two batches, they did, with the three companies "

"By the way, Colour-sergeant, will you see that the men have a pint apiece with me "

"I will, sir, certainly, sir Thank you, sir They'll enjoy that Mr Hipkins, the landlord of the Green Man, always has some lovely barrels Beautiful stuff There'll be a good deal drunk by our fellows and the Dolby fellows and the Stanstead fellows But the twelve-mile tramp home will soon take that out of the system You'll be getting a good supper yourself sir The officers all go up to the Hall, and the Squire takes a regular delight in doing them well I don't suppose we'll start back a minute before nine, if then Last year we didn't see the clock in the Market Square till half-past two in the morning Some of the men's wives was a bit crabbed about it, and in fact one or two of them was actually waiting by the drill-hall, and what they didn't call the

Volunteers! Volunteering's really more for bachelors. Well, a girl likes to see her young man in scarlet. You know. She feels she's got something, as they say. But after she's married she don't seem to care what he's in. I suppose any woman who's seen her man in a nightshirt about six o'clock of a winter's morning knows what a humbug clothes are, though me being a tailor I oughtn't to say so. But anyway, a woman once she's married sets her face against anything that gives men an excuse for getting out. Doesn't matter what it is. Volunteering, freemasonry, or, bowls, and I dare say if it comes to that the Salvation Army."

As if to give the lie to such cynicism the men struck up with Rosie O'Grady

"Sweet Rosie O'Grady,
My beautiful Rose,
She's my little lady,
As everyone knows
And when we are married,
How happy we'll be!
For I love sweet Rosie O'Grady,
And Rosie O'Grady loves me"

"Yes," Sergeant Capstick observed, "but when he *has* married her and she's been through his pockets once or twice he won't think her quite so much of a little lady. All the same, perhaps I'm not the one to say so, sir, because me and Mrs Capstick couldn't have got on better not if we'd never have married at all."

So in talk and songs and the tramp of feet the time passed, and just after sunset A Company reached Paxford, five minutes after D Company from Stanstead, with Captain Henry Falconer in command and a red-haired round-faced subaltern, Tom Pownall, the son of another

landowner in the neighbourhood who was learning to inherit a property by acting as his father's agent. Five minutes after the Loam men F Company from Dolby with Captain Pledge and two subalterns, Fleming and Rickaby, marched on to the village green.

Pledge was a dapper little man in the mid-thirties, one of the partners of Pledge's, the big port people, who lived in a large house on the western border of the county and was mad about motor-cars. Fleming, the senior subaltern in the battalion after Howes, who was in South Africa, was a partner in an old family brewery at Dolby, and Rickaby was the son of a prosperous lawyer in the same place.

All his fellow-officers made themselves most agreeable to John, who as the junior remained behind to see the men settled at their tea while the others walked on up to the Medicotts.

By the time John reached the precincts of the Hall by a short cut guaranteed to save him five minutes, dusk was deepening through sapphire into night and a half-moon was hanging serenely above that architectural mixture of a house, Elizabethan, Caroline, Georgian, and Regency. After getting lost among the stables at the back he asked a groom for fresh directions and was advised to go round through the garden, the door to which in a high brick wall was opened for him. Presently John found himself on a great lawn, in the middle of which was the stooping figure of a girl. He looked round for a path by taking which he might avoid the embarrassment of explaining to her who he was and why he was here, but the garden descended in terraces toward darkling trees, and in the uncertain light he dreaded further complications. So he

kept on across the lawn, and as he drew near to the stooping girl he saw that she was picking daffodils. She was so much absorbed in her task that John was within five yards of her before she heard the creaking of his accoutrements and jumped up.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry for disturbing you, but I was given a short cut and I think I made rather a muddle of it."

"The others are in the house," she said, and if the half-moon riding over the top of the Hall had spoken to him John would not have found her voice more silver-sweet.

"I know. I had to stay behind a few minutes and see that the men were properly settled. My name's John Ogilvie. I'm one of the subalterns of the Loam Company, the junior subaltern."

"And I'm Rose Medlicott."

*Ah, what avails the sceptred race!
Ah, what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine
Rose Aylmer, whom these watchful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and sighs
I consecrate to thee*

It takes eight lines to write it, but John thought the whole of that lyric in the momentary silence which succeeded the telling of her name.

"And you're picking daffodils," was what in his own opinion he most idiotically said.

"Yes, they're marvellously early this spring. Mother wanted some for her room, and I'd forgotten to pick them for her."

"I'll help you," John exclaimed with enthusiasm, bending over to grab at the dewy trumpets

She laughed

"You can't possibly pick daffodils in uniform Besides, I've picked enough now Come along, and I'll escort you safely indoors "

It was in an empty lamplit drawing-room into which she led him through a french-window that they stopped and looked at one another, neither of them deliberately, but both driven by an impulse of emotion beyond their mastery

It was a large room with a high heavily corniced ceiling and five tall french-windows curtained with faded blue damask Above the floriated and foliated mantelpiece of white marble was a great gilt mirror which apparently doubled the size of the room, and holding in its reflection the bluish-grey wallpaper seemed to give a sensation of an abode beneath the sea, so that the very ornaments were as the shell and corals of the ocean's floor

She stood there in a blue dress to which the live blue of her eyes gave a powdery pastel look She was holding to her heart the daffodils she had gathered, and all their yellow was dull beside that glinting light-brown hair rolled back over a pompadour And for John even the scarlet of his sleeve as he raised an arm to take off his helmet lost all effect of intense colour when he watched her carnation cheeks

They could not have stood there more than two or three seconds, but when from the world without, beyond, above this deep-sea silence came a burst of remote laughter, they thought they must have been standing here for long minutes and both started in confusion, she dropping a

daffodil or two, he a glove Both stooped quickly to regain what they had let fall, and thus their heads came close together John could feel the flame of her blush, he fancied

"I don't know why I dropped those daffodils," she said foolishly, for there was but one thing she could have said which would not have sounded foolish at that moment

"I don't know why I never met you before," said John
"Do you live here?"

"Fifteen miles away at Milbourne I'm at the Vicarage there "

"I think we ought to go along to the dining-room," she said, no doubt unaware that she sighed in saying it

He followed her along a primly proportioned Georgian corridor into a winding Tudor passage to the front hall, where she left him to the services of a footman, who when John had divested himself of sword and Sam Browne, of haversack, water-bottle, and rolled greatcoat, brought him to the dining-room where among the scarlet of his brother officers, the crimson of Mrs Medicott's gown, and the purple of the Squire's countenance he saw Rose like a vivid blossom in a drift of dead leaves

"This is the infant of His Majesty's Auxiliary Forces, Squire," announced Falconer

"Jolly glad to welcome you," the host barked "Come and sit down I hear Rosie found you wandering like a lost hound and brought you safely into the kennel Come along now, and swallow some soup You've had a good tramp, and you've another good tramp before you, don't forget "

John was too late to find a place beside Rose, which took a great deal of the savour from the excellent soup, but

he was fortunately opposite to her, and that brought some of it back again

After supper, well primed with champagne, John felt optimistic about getting a *tête-à-tête* with Rose, but alas, Pledge and Falconer began to talk about the necessity of moving off at once, and John, although he might be in command of A Company, did not feel that he could stay behind without the other commanding officers. When they were putting on their accoutrements in the hall, he pondered which part of his equipment could be most easily left behind in order to provide him with an excuse to call back at the Hall very soon. For a moment he considered leaving his sword, for that would certainly be a sufficiently important item to justify calling back for it even as soon as to-morrow. In the end he decided to abandon his water-bottle.

The men, who had drunk plenty of the Green Man's beer, sang for the first four miles of the march home without a pause. Then they grew sleepy, and there was no sound except the tramp-tramp of eighty pairs of boots between the hedgerows.

Sergeant Capstick was chattering, but John did not hear what he was saying. The moon was company enough, sailing beside him over copse and spinney, a mirror for his dreams.

Rose Aylmer, all were thine!

The clock in the Market Square struck the half-hour of midnight as A Company marched into Loam, but it was nearly two before John reached the Vicarage, for he had a puncture a few hundred yards from the drill-hall and had to walk his machine all the way to Milbourne.

He did not mind the fatigue after marching twenty-four miles in heavy equipment. Thoughts of Rose Medlicott carried him like wings.

But by Sunday morning the wings had moulted to nothing. The water-bottle he had left behind as an excuse to revisit the Hall now seemed a most inadequate reason for calling there so soon as to-morrow. Moreover, when he had recovered the water-bottle, what would give him an excuse to return? One could not appear casually at a large country house fifteen miles away every other day of the week, and the best he could hope for was an invitation to—to what? Tennis would not begin for weeks yet. John racked his fancy to discover some reason for frequenting the Paxford country. If it were late in the year he might have made a passionate desire to capture a purple-emperor an excuse for frequenting the Paxford woods, which were a recognized haunt of that butterfly. Even the birds would not be nesting yet awhile, and an alleged anxiety to discover a nightingale's nest would not serve him for a long time. He asked the Vicar just before church if hounds were meeting again at Paxford before the season finished, and heard with a grateful emotion akin to rapture that they were meeting there next Thursday.

*O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord,
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever*

John's fellow-pupils gazed at him in astonishment to hear the fervour of his singing of the Lenten *Benedicite* at Morning Prayer, and never did the twenty-five minutes of the Vicar's badly read sermon go by so swiftly as they went by that Sunday morning to thoughts of Rose.

The next day John set out after lunch to recover his water-bottle.

"But it's a disgusting day for a long bicycle ride," the Vicar pointed out "This east wind's enough to cut one in half Why didn't you write a note and get them to send it into Loam by the carrier?"

"Well, you see, I'm not absolutely certain that I did leave it at the Medicotts I might have left it in the village hall when I was fussing about the men The wind won't be too bad I shall have it sideways most of the time "

"If you're really going over to the Medicotts, Mr Ogilvie," said Mrs Damson, coming into the hall at that moment, "I wish you'd take a message from me to Rose "

"Of course, I will, Mrs Damson," John answered in what he hoped did not sound too much like a shout of exultation

"I'm having a preliminary meeting of helpers for our bazaar and sale of work in May for the organ fund, and if she could spare the time to come over, it would be so kind and helpful Mrs Medicott has been good enough to promise to take a stall, but I don't want to bother her yet awhile "

"No, of course you don't," John agreed

"So I thought that perhaps Rose would deputize for her at this preliminary meeting, but there's no real need for her to come if it's in the least inconvenient "

"I'll tell her that," said John, already composing in his mind the invitation, which did he know anything about persuasiveness, would suggest that if Rose Medicott did find it inconvenient it would practically mean the abandonment of the bazaar for this year

The east wind was searing, but for all John cared it might have been the balmiest zephyr *To Much Barton,*

Spuraway, Paxford, Gayfield, Stanstead said the first signpost *Much Barton and Spuraway* were left behind *To Paxford, Gayfield, Stanstead* said another signpost *To Paxford* said the left arm of a third signpost Who cared what the right arm said?

"D'd I by any chance leave a water-bottle here on Saturday?" John enquired cunningly at the Green Man "No? Perhaps I left it in the village hall Who has the key? Mrs Middleditch? The third cottage on the right past the church? Thank you so much I'm sorry to bother you, but did you happen to notice a water-bottle I think I left behind in the village hall last Saturday?"

Mrs Middleditch, a massive woman engaged with the Monday washing, wiped her hands and offered to open the hall for John to have a look round

"Though I was giving it a tidy-up this morning and I didn't see nothing of no water-bottle "

"I'm sorry to be such a nuisance, but perhaps if you wouldn't mind "

"No nuisance at all, sir," Mrs Middleditch declared, and after giving a dab with the palm of her hand to the three black-headed hatpins which fastened an old cap of her husband's to her thinning hair and throwing over her shoulders a tippet of worn fur, she unhooked the key and led the way toward the hall

"There's a nasty bite in the wind to-day, isn't there? But there you are, what else can we expect in March? My eldest girl's laid up with the tonsillitis Can't hardly swallow a morsel of soup, and that's made my washing a bit stingy this week No, I certainly don't remember seeing no hot-water bottle laying around Was it one of these rubber ones?"

John explained its military appearance

"Well, I think they enjoyed themselves on Saturday all right, though the last thing any of 'em would have missed would have been a water-bottle Mr Hipkins says the beer they drunk really frightened him Well all this soldiering might seem a waste of time to some people, but what I say is 'let everybody enjoy themselves' I've got a nephew of my sister's out in this South African mess-up at this very moment Been out there six months he has and never seen a Bore yet by what I can hear The Squire was at me the other day for our Jim to join these Vollingteers, but as I said to my husband, I said, 'What's the use in him biking over to Stanstead just to spend his wages on racketing about Stanstead' "

John smiled at the notion of racketing about the sleepy little country town of Stanstead

"Ah, you're laughing But that's the way with the young folk nowadays Laugh at everything, they does "

By this time they had reached the village hall, where John made a pretence of looking for his water-bottle

"Not here, I'm afraid "

He pressed half a crown into Mrs Middleditch's hand still warm and moist from her washing

"Perhaps I left it up at Medlicott Hall "

"Ah, you was up there, was you? Then depend on it that's just where it is Miss Rose was through the village not ten minutes ago She'll be back home by now "

John felt very much inclined to press another half-crown into Mrs Middleditch's hand, before he mounted his bicycle and rode on to Medlicott Hall

The pile seemed larger than by the moonlight on

Saturday Each separate architectural addition was a house in itself, a house with a long history, a house which it was impossible to imagine being built, a house which had grown from this Loamshire earth like the very oaks themselves As John bicycled slowly up the drive through the park he thought how absurd it was not to recognize the impossibility of swaying the people who lived in houses like that, and almost in the same instant what an indomitable force it must be in Ireland which in hundreds of years had made such houses as this inconceivable there and which had caught up the would-be residents in such houses, its self-supposing conquerors, and turned them into comedians or lunatics And then, oh fortune! Rose came walking down a wooded path to join the main drive, the two deerhounds with her rushing forward to bark at the stranger

"I'm afraid I'm being rather a bore, but I think I left my water-bottle at the Hall on Saturday night "

"I say you'll come in and have tea, won't you?"

Two banal sentences, two large dogs, a bicycle, a young woman in a Harris tweed coat and skirt of smoky blue, a young man in a suit of Donegal tweed, an English park through which the March wind was chasing far and wide the dead leaves which the winter had left in damp drifts, half of those leaves imponderable now as cobwebs No more than that Yet the young woman and the young man felt as if they had been whirled round the globe by that wind in the instant of meeting and dropped again upon this still dislusted wintry grass to find the spot from which they had started a flaming green paradise in which they were burning together in a delectable fire

"Then it was love at first sight," John heard himself

say in a voice which seemed to himself as dry and feeble as a twig fretting against a window-pane

"It must have been," she whispered

"Rose!" he cried, ravished by the tremulous confidence of her voice, and when he leaned forward in eager gratitude he pressed upon the bell of his bicycle, the sudden shrilling of which so far from affronting the solemnity of this moment proclaimed the solemnity of it like a sacring-bell

"I always thought love at first sight was impossible," Rose avowed

"It is very rare," she was assured by incarnate experience

They looked at each other in silence, their eyes luminous as the secret jewel they had discovered together. The two dogs discerning one of those strange human withdrawals from the matter in hand collapsed patiently on the grass and gazed at the lovers over their paws

"Rudy and Speed are feeling hurt," she told him, and the two dogs confirmed her statement by thumping their tails

"Did you think about me after I had gone?" he asked

"Yes, I did "

"What did you think?"

"I thought I loved you "

"Did you think I would come to-day?"

"Well, no, but I thought how lovely it would be if you did "

"As a matter of fact I left my water-bottle behind on purpose "

"Yes, that was a good idea. You couldn't very well

tell my family that you had come tearing over from Milbourne because you had fallen in love with me "

John frowned He was again at the mercy of that hideous incubus called youth

That night when he got back to the Vicarage he wrote a letter to Miriam Stern

MILBOURNE VICARAGE,

LOAMSHIRE

March 11th, 1901

My dear Mrs Stern,

I promised you last summer in Fontainebleau that I would tell you when anything really serious happened to me Well, something very serious has happened I have fallen madly in love at first sight with a girl called Rose Medlicott who is the eldest daughter of some people who have a large house and a good deal of land at Paxford about 15 miles from where I am living with this coach She is eighteen and a half years old, exactly the same age as myself all but three days Descriptions aren't very satisfactory, but she has very bright light brown hair and a marvellous complexion with vivid blue eyes, the most vivid blue eyes I ever saw Not dark or light, but the colour of lapis lazuli is as near as I can get to it

I only saw Rose for the first time on Saturday evening, and to-day I rode over to Medlicott Hall and met her in the park by good luck and told her at once that I loved her So you can imagine that I must

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have felt pretty sure of myself As a matter of fact I seemed to be driven by some impulse quite outside myself You will shake your head and remind me about that girl Connie Fenwick a year ago Well, I'm not going to scoff at that love, because I undoubtedly was in love with her as far as I could be in love then But Connie was not in love with me She looked upon me as a more or less agreeable youth whose admiration was worth having as long as there was nobody serious Rose is in love with me You must believe I know what I am saying when I tell you that If you saw her you would admit at once that a girl like her could not tell me that she loved me the instant I told her and after we hadn't had ten minutes alone together since we met, unless she did love

I asked her if she had ever thought she cared for anybody else and she told me that until she had met me, apart from her family, she had only cared for dogs and horses She's not in the least sentimental or silly in any way She doesn't care particularly for poetry or music or anything artistic, except a little for painting In fact she's a typical English girl except that there is a kind of fairylike quality in her sporting tastes, as if the world of horses and dogs were her natural element to which she had to return from time to time She's mad about the house they live in, and it is a wonderful house, a kind of epitome of the England of four hundred years And what seems to me the most convincing proof of this love of mine is that all the discontent I felt with England has vanished I realize in loving Rose that I love England I understand the difference between myself and that friend of mine Fitzgerald whom Emil disliked so

much I see now that I am really rooted here. You know that for some time now at the back of my mind I've been supposing that my mission in life was to ruffle the Celtic fringe in the company of people like Fitzgerald, but the fact that I can fall in love with somebody so essentially English as Rose proves to me that I could never have embarked upon that mission with the fanaticism one ought to have for any business like that. So I may as well give up dreams which I had no overmastering impulse to turn into realities.

In spite of the emotion, I feel extraordinarily at peace with the world. I know I can't expect her family to recognize anything like a formal engagement, and it will be October, 1903, before I am twenty-one. Still, I think in a year we might hope to be engaged and we think we ought to be able to get married in three years and six months. I shall have about four hundred a year of my own. Of course her family may think me ineligible. Mrs Medlicott I can't altogether make out. She is a handsome woman of about forty, but she has a curious coldness. I don't mean that she was particularly cold to me. She seemed to me just as cold with everybody else. She's one of those thin-lipped well-bred Englishwomen who have become accepted as typical. I see nothing of Rose in her except the intensely blue eyes, which in Mrs Medlicott are hard, almost the texture as well as the colour of lapis lazuli. The Squire is about ten years older than his wife—a bluff boisterous fox-hunting squire such as you might put on the stage. Rose has a sister at school. Her elder brother is in the 17th Hussars and her other brother is still at Winchester. So you see, I have gone the whole hog in my

surrender to convention in my choice of a family of which I hope one day to become a member

I haven't tried to do any writing since I have been at Milbourne, but I have done a good deal of reading. You remember that you advised me to read Ibsen. Well, I thought that as I'm supposed to read a certain amount of German with this tutor it would be a good notion to read a German translation of Ibsen. I've no interest in German beyond knowing enough to ask for the necessities of life if I ever put foot in the beastly country which I don't expect I ever shall. We started with the Doll's House, but Damson's conventional mind was badly upset by it, and a solemn auto da fè was held in which the offending volume (it was a small paperbacked affair) was burnt. It was an odd effect on one to be brought up against that kind of mind. It was like trying to see the point of view of some prehistoric beast. How anybody could conceivably be shocked by the Doll's House is unimaginable. Yet this Church of England parson was genuinely shocked by it. 'That kind of thing strikes at the very root of family life', he told me.

I tried to carry the war into the enemy's territory by asking him if he really believed all he publicly professed to believe when he was officiating in church. Do these people believe? It seems to me that if they did they could not be content with such a tepid response from the creatures for whom they have elected to be made spiritually responsible. I can't help feeling that most of our peculiarly English religion is less a creed than a code of good manners, supported by the people at the top as what they consider an example. You're always hearing English

people talking about setting a good example I've been reading lately one or two books by Catholic writers, and I must say it's a relief to get away from this good example business and find an insistence upon personal responsibility to a positive creed. It's not surprising to find the social agitator thinking that organized religion is the enemy of the oppressed classes for which in my opinion a better word would be 'suppressed'. It's the knocking out of the individual that I hate about the progress of what is fancied to be an increasingly prosperous world. And it is the comparative liberty of behaviour subject to an unfree opinion which attracts me about Catholicism. That seems to me a much truer expression of the purpose of God than liberty of opinion with behaviour in chains. I'd rather act as I like in accord with a rule of thought than think as I like in accord with a rule of action.

Yet in spite of what you will be thinking is my mental unsettlement the only positive belief I have at this moment is that if I could persuade my father to let me have my money now and if I could persuade Rose's father and mother to let me marry Rose at once I could happily live the rest of my life with her. What if other people did consider that to be vegetating? I would not be vegetating, because it isn't in me to vegetate. If I could contribute as much to English literature as Gilbert White of Selborne I should be more than justified in the choice I had made. That wouldn't be vegetating. I think that my writing to you like this will be a proof to you that I have gone through a tremendous experience. I'm not such an egotistical fool as to suppose that because it is I who have fallen in love that fact possesses a special emotional value. I just want to tell the only

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person I know who I hope will be willing to believe me that since I met Rose Medlicott 48 hours ago I have gone through a change that must be the same kind of change people undergo when they experience 'conversion'

If it had been conversion in the religious sense the way to express it would have been clear enough, but who is going to recognize conversion through love? I realize that it will be regarded by everybody as youthful folly, and that nobody will take us seriously. There is no possible way for us to get married. Even if we had the courage to do so we could be separated legally. It's most improbable that even an engagement would be accepted by other people. And this seems to me wrong. There must be some driving force behind the emotion in me which if naturally encouraged would be valuable. It ought not to be allowed to wither slowly and be looked back upon when I am thirty like measles or whooping-cough. After all, this kind of experience does not happen to everybody. And love at first sight, which now I know, is not just an overwhelming physical desire. When I was attracted by Connie my one idea was to express it in a kiss. I have not even thought about kissing Rose. But if I go on I shall become incoherent, and anyway this letter is much too long.

I saw in the 'Standard' this morning a splendid notice of Julius's concert on Saturday. I am so glad. And tell Emil that I know I owe him a letter, but that I've had nothing to write about except volunteering which he'd hate to read about. I couldn't write to him about Rose, because if he did not respond to my sensitive condition of mind over her I'm afraid I should never forgive him. So it's wisest to take no risks.

Forgive me for being a bore and inflicting this screed upon you

*With love,
Your devoted
John Ogilvie*

John had contemplated a letter to his stepmother, in which he would challenge her capacity for sympathy, but the long letter to Mrs Stern had exhausted him, and on reading it through before sealing it up in the envelope he found it so inadequate an expression of his state of mind that he abandoned the notion of writing to Elise

However, in the morning he himself received a letter from Elise

98 CHURCH ROW,
HAMPSTEAD,
N W
March 11th, 1901

My dear John,

This is to inform you that I expect to present you with either a half-brother or a half-sister next September I hope you won't mind very much Your father has taken the news philosophically But to be serious, I do want you very much not to mind

*Loving
Elise*

When this child was his own age, John thought, his

father would be sixty-five, a very very old man. And he himself would be old enough, close upon thirty-seven! Would he be living with Rose in that magical small house and large garden in the heart of the country, saying with Horace, *hoc erat in votis*? He sat down to write and assure Elise how glad her news had made him, and as a proof he confided in her about Rose.

Elise wrote back

Dearest John,

It was sweet of you to write as you did. Be sure that I shall love your Rose. She sounds enchanting. You didn't suggest that I should say anything about her to your father, and perhaps, his legal mind being apt to look at things rather differently from romantic scatterbrains like you and me, it would be better not to say anything to him for the moment. But be sure that if you stand in need of support I shall support you. Advice is a dull thing, but I think if I were you I would see how things go this spring before you begin to talk about an engagement. It's no good pretending that older people are sensible, because they are not, and I feel convinced that no older people will agree that the future can be settled on the strength of two young people meeting twice. I'm sure you'll see this yourself. You know and she knows and I am feeling so happy at the moment that I know you and Rose would live happily ever afterwards, but I think we'll have to consider ourselves exceptional.

My blessings to you and your Rose

Loving

Elise

Miriam Stern's reply arrived.

21 CLAREMOUNT GARDENS,
HAMPSTEAD,
N W

March 13th, 1901

My dear John,

I am proud you should have written to me as you did When women grow near to forty they are apt to be flattered by the frankness of the young And I know that's exactly what you don't want to be reminded that you are at the moment, because you are still young enough to feel youth like a deformity Still, in justice to poor despised youth you must remember that unless you were young you could not have had that wonderful wonderful experience Whatever your actual age you would have to be young for that And I'm inclined to think that beloved by the gods you will die young, even though you should be a hundred years old when you leave this world

The only doubt your letter leaves in my mind is if you with this wondering much more whether this world is a prelude to another world than whether swallows ever hibernate, which as I remember was the problem that vexed Gilbert White most, whether you, dear John, will be quite so content as you think even to allow an appearance of vegetating If you and your Rose could be as stanc as the lovers of the Grecian Urn, why then, yes But you cannot be, and it would be a terrible thing for her if you should suddenly wake up one day and find out that your creative desire was leading you beyond the quiet ways of Gilbert White At the risk of losing your friendship, John, and I do not suppose

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you realize even faintly how much that friendship means to me, I shall beseech you to guard against disaster by assuming for a while that you are just like any other young man who falls in love with a beautiful girl. Discipline cannot destroy what is really vital. If you are a creative artist, and you may be, you will one day experience inspiration. In one flashing moment you will conceive the whole of a work of art, but if you suppose that you can give enduring form to that conception except by the most arduous discipline you will not be a true creative artist, but an artistic dreamer. I'm sure I don't have to argue that with you.

Now, love as love has come to you is very like inspiration, and if you intend to make anything of it you must not expect outsiders to surrender to what they are bound to consider your self-indulgence. When somebody like myself who has lived almost entirely with artists all her life hears any demand for recognition before accomplishment she is apt to be sceptical. I have heard about so many masterpieces which never got beyond a blank sheet of foolscap, and the creators of those masterpieces never failed to find me prosaic and material because I would not accept the intention as the equivalent of the achievement. So please, John, do not throw this letter down in a rage because you think you misjudged my imagination. I do accept with absolute faith that you have had a transcendent experience which is granted to very few, but my scepticism fostered by the life I have led and the company I have kept compels me to add 'Yes, and what are you going to make of it?' And I must be honest with myself and you, and add still a second question which touches me more nearly and that is 'What is she going to make of you?'

There is a danger, you know, in doing as you are doing and concentrating at your age all the aspirations of youth on an ideal embodied in a single woman And remember, it's you yourself who supplied me with that criticism when you told me that falling in love with your Rose had put out of your head your 'mission to ruffle the Celtic fringe' Not that I want you to involve yourself in political adventures I have seen too much misery from that in Poland But I'm not sure that you will be content presently at having sacrificed your beliefs so readily The completeness with which you have thrown them over for this English idyll is a little disquieting to me Have you really considered the future? I do not suppose for an instant that her father or your father will agree to your getting married at once Obviously they will not Very well, then, you are faced with an interminable engagement, and you must remember that this will place a steadily increasing physical strain on both of you You next October will be going to Oxford, and whatever you may think now you must change very rapidly during the next three or four years I am not going to prophesy that this change will involve a change in your feelings for Rose, but though you may love her, as you think, just as devotedly, you will not love her in the same way The ecstasy cannot endure It's not conceivable that it should Therefore I entreat you not at any rate yet awhile to consider marriage or an engagement Love your Rose, but in loving her be content to be grateful to fortune for giving you at your age a grande passion Our modern education does not tend to encourage these great passions of youth, but once upon a time we thought they were the very breath of poetry

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But, John, do think of it as a grande passion of youth Enjoy it with an awareness all the while of its transiency What folly to write so! Would it be a grande passion if you did not believe it immortal? I'm afraid I'm letting you down badly Perhaps I'm jealous I ought to be proud that you confided in me, and here I am reading you a lecture like a maiden aunt Yet if Emil could fall in love with an English Rose like yours and be loved by her as I'm sure sure sure that she loves you, I should be happy beyond words And if Julius could fall in love with an English Rose four years hence I would be even happier So isn't it perverse of me to be demurring over your doing it? I think that nobody less than the Queen of Elfiand would please me for you I'm ungrateful! I'm ungrateful! That you should have chosen me for your confidante shows I have been able to give you something Women are odious as a sex Yes, John, I'm afraid they are They love to be maternal, and when one of them finds a young man to respond to her maternal cravings that's the last aspect of herself she wishes him to accept

And now, much more important than all I've written above How can I help? How can I, a hopeless exotic, gain admission to Medlicott Hall and lull the parental mefiance? You see, I'm thinking that I should like to have Rose to stay with me, for I am sure I shall love her, and then you shall see her all day and every day We must contrive this somehow Anyway, you can rely on me to help And I want you to say of me some day, 'Das Ewig—Weibliche zieht uns hinan', the Eternal Feminine draws us upward, but I hope your German has progressed far enough to have translated that for yourself

I think that Julius can now be considered well enough to give as many recitals in the year as will keep him before the public. He really had a magnificent reception last Saturday, and played that Bach Partita he played last year when you first came to our house. And, much to Emil's disgust, he played Raff's Cavatina for one of his encores! Emil has decided he will go in for a Balliol scholarship next year. He seems to be enjoying the Upper Sixth. You won't mind if I don't tell him your news? He's such a strange boy and I would not like him to write anything to you that would frousser your friendship. I fear I have handed on to him my jealousy. The fundamental trouble is this wretched division between the Jew and the Gentile. It is less insisted upon in England than elsewhere except perhaps Holland and the Scandinavian countries, but it is harsh enough even here.

Think, John, what it would have meant if you had been a Jew and had met your Rose. That would have brought you up against the problem of the future. Yet just now in this very letter I was babbling about English Roses for my sons. I fear it's improbable that they will ever find them. A Jewish woman is less exposed than a man to this continuous reminder of an inferior status, and what do you think it was which brought home to me as a girl the ultimate equality? A story in the 'Arabian Nights'. I had been weeping for the woes of Scott's Rebecca in 'Ivanhoe', and that very evening read the story in the 'Arabian Nights' about the Prince whose sorceress wife turned the lower part of him into marble and transformed into fishes the inhabitants of the city he ruled. The Mahometans into white fishes, the Christians into

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blue fishes, the Parsees into red fishes, and the Jews into yellow fishes The picture of those fishes swimming about in the pool, all equal as fishes, was very colourful and very consoling When Emil first went to St James's I tried the effect of this story on him He said rather wittily I think for a boy of thirteen, 'And no doubt the red, white, and blue fish thought they were the Union Jack'

Perhaps you will be up in London for a week-end soon Come and see me, and I'll play a part dear to women immemorially

Your affectionate

Miriam Stern

John read the letters from his stepmother and Mrs Stern, resting in a roadside copse between Milbourne and Paxford He was on his way to the meet at Medlicott Hall, with Rose's promise to find a good excuse for not hunting that day so that he and she could follow the hunt on foot How little Mrs Stern, with all her imagination, would understand what it meant for Rose to sacrifice what might be the last chance she would have of being out before the season ended Still, even if she had seemed not quite able to appreciate Rose her letter had taken the business seriously And Elise had taken it seriously too To be sure, she could hardly have done otherwise when she was proposing to bring this infant into the world next autumn Still

He mounted his Rover again and bicycled on faster and faster until from the top of the hill down into Paxford he could see with an effect of scattered playing-cards on a green baize cloth the meet in front of the Hall His

heart began to beat so fast at the prospect of beholding Rose again that he had to jump off his machine and wait for a minute or two to secure his composure. Several of his brother officers would be out to-day. He must not arrive with too farouche an air.

When John saw Rose, the hunt was moving off to draw a neighbouring covert. He was spared the embarrassment of greeting her in front of people he knew.

"If they find in Barrington wood they're sure to cross the high road on the other side of the village. We'll get over to the cross-roads with our bikes and take to the country when we see which way the fox is running."

John was glad she took the proceedings in hand like this. As they reached the cross-roads the hounds came into sight across the rolling meadows running in exactly the opposite direction from that for which they were prepared.

"We'll have to bike on," Rose decided, "and trust to picking them up a mile or so further along."

But they did not pick them up further along.

A five-barred gate in a hedge of blackthorn, whose buds of blossom were pearly on the sunny side, revealed a sweep of ancient pasture rising to a wood, the solitude of which called to the young lovers.

"We could put our bikes on the other side of the hedge, and if we sat for a while by that wood we should see the hunt if it comes this way," John suggested.

Except for the green of the dog's-mercury and a few

pinched anemones it was still winter in the woods, but on the other side, out of the east wind, primroses infrequent and indeterminate as the stars of early twilight were visible along the mossy banks at the edge, and on the bald hill opposite numerous hares were gambolling. Of hounds and hunters and hunt-followers there was neither sight nor sound.

"I don't believe I ever made such a bad guess before," Rose declared.

"And do you feel mortified?"

"Not a bit."

"And not disappointed?"

She shook her head.

"And you still love me?"

She nodded very slowly in sweet assent, and when John drew her to him the first wakening of passion lighted her eyes even as in the same instant virginity thus challenged cast a tender veil to dim their transcendent fire. The lips of the lovers touched as flowers may touch in the wind. Then for a few moments they stood looking at one another until, borne down it seemed by excess of emotion, they sat upon that mossy bank by the wood's edge and began to chatter about the commonplaces of country life.

"You're looking rather pale," said John at last.

"I never kissed anybody before."

He was silent, awed by the simple statement.

From far away the sound of a huntsman's horn came thinly over the pastures and wind-bleached ploughlands.

"The hunt's coming this way," John exclaimed apprehensively.

He could not forget the swiftness, the intolerable swiftness with which the passing moments would sweep into

the flood of time Rose and himself and their March tryst

"No, they're running in exactly the opposite direction "

She spoke with a cool certitude which seemed strangely out of keeping with the pallor of emotion in her countenance

"White rose, white rose, I'm glad," he murmured
"Because there are such thousands of things I want to tell you "

"And things I want to hear," she responded, laying quickly on his hand that slim brown boy's hand of hers

Whatever eloquence John supposed he was waiting to pour forth was abruptly silenced by this first involuntary gesture of love The thousand hopes and plans and confidences, dreams, assurances, and passionate reiterations, were reduced to the sighing of her name

"Rose!"

Even to seek to express his love in kisses was beyond him That first kiss must remain for yet a little while the only kiss so that the perfection of it should not be marred by so much as a kiss of like perfection in everything except its singleness In this entranced silence, they sat for a long time upon that mossy bank On both sides the lustrous green of holly-bushes sheltered them from the fretful wind which nagged the outskirts of the wood and fidged among the bare boughs within

John was once upon the point of placing before Rose the problem of the date of their marriage when he was suddenly overwhelmed by a much more tremendous problem How, even in the hatefully remote future of the three years and six months which appeared the earliest credible date, should he ever confront the realities of

marriage with this girl whom one kiss had shaken to that tremulous pallor? No doubt her mother would explain the facts, but if by chance her mother left her in ignorance

and anyway, nobody ever did explain such facts properly, so that on him would fall the revelation. She might be so horrified that her love for him would be killed by it. She might suppose he had gone mad. Would it be possible to consult Mrs Stern on this matter? But no, one could not discuss such a matter without a degree of frankness that was unimaginable between himself and a woman like Mrs Stern. John, a schoolboy still in his knowledge of live humanity, sat pondering his problem. And Rose sat silent too. So might they have sat until the grey of the March sky lost the luminosity of the day's prime and deadened in the chill of afternoon if a fox, splendidly rufous among the subdued colours of the winter scene, had not passed upon his anxious way hardly twenty yards below them.

"View-halloo! View-halloo! View-halloo!" Rose cried through cupped hands, springing to her feet.

"Oh, why bother about the hunt?" John protested. "If one fox has slipped them, good luck to him."

"I hallooed before I remembered where we were," Rose answered. "You see, John, I've never viewed a fox before except when I was only thinking of the fox."

"You don't really want to bring the whole galloping mob this way?" he pressed jealously.

"No, I just want to be with you."

"Well, perhaps we ought to make some effort to see what is going on," John suggested.

Her readiness to forgo the traditional attitude of a young sportswoman touched him. It would not do to let

selfishness begin. There was always to be an exquisite equality between Rose and himself. It would be wrong to impose his own views upon her even over such a trivial matter as hunting etiquette. For her this business possessed a significance far deeper than the jargon and ritual which served to express it. And naturally he would not himself shoot a fox, which meant that he was a worshipper of this very fetish without the logical right to scoff at initiates farther advanced than he was.

Later on that afternoon, when a good deal of unsuccessful bicycling in search of the hunt had made them feel they had genuinely followed it, Rose brought John back to the Hall and took him to the sitting-room she shared with her young sister Ann now away at school. In this shrine of childhood he became more sharply aware of the difference in their backgrounds and amid this intimacy of immemorial surroundings more sharply aware of himself as a stranger. All that their two childhoods shared were one or two of the framed coloured plates of old Christmas numbers of the *Graphic* or *Illustrated London News*—‘Bubbles’, ‘Yoicks! Tally-ho!’, and the juvenile Nelson bidding farewell to his mother. On him as on her that demurely greedy damsel in mob-cap and high sash with cherries in her lap had gazed down throughout those long years between the Queen’s two Jubilees. She had been a guest at their nursery teas, a well-behaved complacent minx never stretching across the table for a piece of cake or lolling upon it with her elbows, never drinking too noisily or speaking with her mouth full, never mumbling her grace or kicking the legs of the table with her heels, content year in and year out with her cherries, only a picture no doubt, yet to every child whose companion she

had been during those years as much alive as any of the little friends that actually came to tea, and likely to endure more vividly in the memory than any of them

"I'm glad you have that picture 'Cherry Ripe', Rose, because I had it when I was a kid, and it gives me something to share with you during all those years before we met. I think if we had met years ago I should have loved you at once."

"I'll show you some photographs of me when I was younger," she offered.

And beside Rose, her hair soft against his temple and his cheek as they turned over the leaves of old albums, John sat conjuring the past therein revealed.

"Here I am after being 'blooded,'" she pointed out.

"You look very dumpy in those gaiters," he said, noting with satisfaction that this particular photograph was yellowing. "They didn't hunt where my grandfather's place was in Cornwall. They used to shoot the foxes. Or trap them. They used to bring one round in a sack and get a contribution from every farmer in turn for having killed it."

"John!" she exclaimed, aghast at the sacrilege.

"Well, there wasn't a pack of hounds anywhere in the west of Cornwall. But don't think that I'm suggesting you should trap or shoot foxes in Loamshire."

The faces grinning at a small Rose blood-bedabbled in the yellowing snapshot had made him jealous for a moment, but he was not prepared to run the risk of shocking her too profoundly.

"And you mustn't think that because I don't hunt, I want you to stop hunting. All the same," he went on, an ill fancy clutching at his heart, "I shan't be able to keep

from feeling anxious I think I'm relieved that the season is nearly over But don't for goodness' sake think I shall be a bore over your hunting Don't think that, will you, darling Rose?"

She looked around at him, searching for evidence in his eyes of meaning what he said

"No, really, you mustn't look like that I'm bound to be jealous of the past"

As he said this he thought of Connie, of that French girl in Geneva, of one or two ridiculous infatuations with schoolfellows' sisters, and even of more ridiculous infatuations with schoolfellows themselves How much of this ought he to confess to Rose? Oh, nothing, nothing Let life begin with the night he met her first among the daffodils

"It's time of which I'm jealous, not people," he explained "In fact, I'm so desperately in love with you that it's really very difficult to talk sense Kiss me again"

He jumped up from the table and held out his arms She came to them, crimson-fired, and overlooked by that demurely greedy maiden in the mob-cap they stood im-paradised, the grandfather clock seemed to tick most insistently, the fire to crackle very loudly, in that quiet room papered with a pattern of nursery rhymes

"Dearest, this *must* be for ever, mustn't it?"

"Well, I should think it *must* be," she declared

But when they were down at tea in the library, a long low room with half a dozen oriels of heavily mullioned lattice-windows opening on the great lawn one swift look from Rose's mother inspired John with a doubt of that imperative's validity The blue glance from her eyes was

ruthless as a kingfisher's swoop to the stream Yet immediately afterwards she was being as agreeable as in her cold way she seemed capable of being

"It's nice for Rosie to have somebody of her own age to play around with, now that both her brothers are out of reach," she was saying, and 'What could she say more?' John was thinking

Presently the Squire came in, boisterously deploring the fact that Petty Sessions had kept him from hunting to-day since by what he had heard the day had been an exhilarating one and in spite of this dry east wind the scent fairly good John, preoccupied, indeed obsessed by the future of Rose and himself, fell to speculating on what the relationship really was between a couple like the Squire and his wife Had they loved each other in youth as he and their eldest daughter loved each other now? The Squire was nearly sixty, which meant that he would have been nearer forty than thirty when he married a girl of nineteen Rose to encourage their own dreams of early marriage had told him that her mother had been only nineteen How could a girl of nineteen possibly have fallen in love with a middle-aged man? Yet unless he believed she had, he would have to believe that Rose was the fruit of a marriage of convenience, a belief most damaging to his own romantic preconceptions

"And so you and Rosie took the wrong road, eh?" the Squire was barking "A pity You'd have seen a grand run, without a check for twenty minutes, if you'd made for the top of Thornbury Hill "

"Well, the first fox doubled back past us," Rose argued in defence of her judgment, "and if they had not lost him, the whole field must have come our way and we should

have had a ripping view I bet if you were still Master you wouldn't have lost that first fox "

"Don't know about that," the Squire woofed, with the gratified muffled bark of a dog who has just successfully caught a tennis-ball "Don't know about that, Rosie But Tom Banks didn't tell me they lost that first fox in Marley Bottom "

"Did you see anybody in Stanstead?" his wife asked

"Henry Falconer and Hugo Pledge were on the Bench with me Hugh Pledge wanted to drive me back in one of those damned motor-cars of his But I told him I wanted to get home to-night, ha-ha, and I thought I'd be safer on my old grey mare, ha-ha! Extraordinary the way a sensible fellow like Pledge doesn't mind making an ass of himself by carrying a noise and a stink all over the country All the same, something will have to be done about those damned engines Hubbard was telling me that he very nearly lost that shire stallion of his the other day You know, Rosie? The animal that got a Special at the Agricultural Hall last year Oh, a beauty! Well, it seems one of the stable lads was walking him along that bit of the Dolby road which passes the lane down to Hubbard's farm when, lo and behold, one of those damned puffing billies came round the corner hooting like a wagonload of monkeys and the stallion bolted and crashed through the nearest gate and damned nearly got his legs badly messed up Poor old Hubbard was almost crying about it Damn it, things have come to a pretty pass when the Queen's—I mean King's highway can be turned into a damned railway-track Some of these bicyclists are bad enough whizzing all over the

place, but at least they don't stink You mark my words, Angela, the Government will have to legislate "

"And how was Henry Falconer?" asked Mrs Medlicott

"Henry? Oh, Henry was the same as usual By the way, he asked after you, Rosie "

"I fancy Henry has rather a tender spot for Rosie," said Rose's mother, extinguishing, through a silver tube, the flame of the spirit-lamp under the kettle, with such a cool certitude of breath that John almost shivered at the ill omen

"He thinks I haven't put my hair up yet," said Rose, who could feel John's anxiety, not less apparent to her because John himself began to sing the praises of Henry Falconer as the finest fellow in the battalion

After tea Rose walked across the park with John to give Rudy and Speed the walk out of which they had been cheated by the meet In the rich blue of the March dusk, he asked her if Henry Falconer was really in love with her She reassured him

"He's been a friend of mine since I was a kid of eight Once I said I wanted to go to May Week at Cambridge because I'd heard two rather conceited cousins of mine bragging about being there And Henry persuaded mother to let me go with Miss Matthews, my governess, and I had a simply glorious time It must have been a frightful bore for an undergraduate lugging a kid of eight and her governess round Cambridge We stayed in rooms And Third Trinity made a lot of bumps I was desperately excited "

"No wonder I get jealous of the past," John groaned

"But, John darling, you couldn't possibly have taken

me to May Week ten years ago You couldn't, could you? You'd have been a little boy in a sailor suit, wouldn't you? John, you would, wouldn't you?"

She was trying to rescue him from the moody silence into which the thought of Henry Falconer's privilege ten years ago had plunged him

"Dearest Rose, I know I'm being idiotic, but unless I could be as idiotic as this I couldn't be so wildly in love with you as I am Anyway, thank God, your mother agreed to your coming over to this bazaar discussion at the Vicarage "

"Yes, and you'll be waiting for me at the top of the hill beyond Paxford "

"At the bottom of the hill," said John firmly "You don't think I could watch you walking all the way up by yourself, do you?"

"Well, no, but I think you'd better wait at the top till you see me coming, and then you can come coasting down to meet me, and we'll walk up together "

"You don't think your mother is beginning to fancy we're seeing each other too often?" John asked

"No no, I don't think she is," Rose answered a little doubtfully "But I think it would be as well not to force ourselves upon her notice It's quite natural for me to want a companion for what we are supposed to be doing to-day, but she might think it a little unnecessary for you to bicycle so many miles just to escort me to Milbourne So that's why I think it's better for you to meet me on the other side of the village I'll just say when I get back that I saw you and that I suggested your coming over to the Hall on Thursday to help me with that rock-garden I'm making I've told her that you are frightfully good at

rock-gardens And mother's very keen on gardening
In fact I sometimes think it's the only thing she is keen
on "

"But I don't know anything about rock-gardens,"
John exclaimed in consternation

"You'll be able to move the rocks about "

"Oh, I can do that "

"Well, that's all I meant Still, if you *could* learn something about rock-plants before Thursday, John darling, it would help That would impress mother more than anything Oh, bother, here we are at the gates Good evening, Dennett "

"Fine day, Miss Rose," said the gatekeeper, bustling to do his duty

"I say, I'm afraid I dropped my handkerchief on the way across," said John

The gate-keeper volunteered to run back and look for it, but was hurriedly told by the owner that he was sure he knew just where he had dropped it

"If you'd hold my bicycle a moment "

"Certainly, sir "

When John and Rose reached a grove of Douglas firs some fifty yards along the drive he drew her within their dark shade

"We couldn't say good night by the gates," he reminded her

"Oh, John, I love you so "

Her voice in the darkness of this grove was disembodied it was like some sweet sound of the night itself, and her movement to let him take her in his arms was light and brief as the flutter of a roosting bird

"On this day of days, good night "

"Did you get your handkerchief quite safe, sir?"
Dennett enquired

"Yes, thanks "

"I've lit your lamp for you, sir "

With a word of thanks to the gatekeeper and the most casual farewell he could muster for Rose, John jumped upon his bicycle and rode fast away. The thought of being so near to Rose and yet without any possible excuse to see her before Tuesday decided him to go up to London the next day and kill there the time that stretched between now and their next meeting. At any rate he would be able to talk about her to Mrs Stern and Elise.

"Why, John, what can have lured you away from Verona already?" Elise asked when he reached Church Row about noon on Saturday.

"What makes you say that?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"Well, when a young man arrives with a copy of the Temple *Romeo and Juliet* sticking out of his pocket one is justified in assuming that he will not be slow to take the allusion."

"Yes, I was reading it in the train."

But he did not add that the discovery of Romeo's sudden transfer of his love from Rosaline to Juliet had enormously increased his appreciation of Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature, and removed the last vestige of self-reproach over Connie. After all a great deal more lay between his falling in love with Connie and Rose than between Romeo's love for Rosaline and Juliet. And nobody could deny that love.

"Reading and dreaming, eh, John?"

Elise was sitting in the back window of the library,

through which the March sun was streaming with the warmth of May in this well-graced room She was bloomed with health, her cheeks as rosy as the tulips on the table by her side, her figure as trim, no more than neatly rounded yet by three months of pregnancy

"You've not said anything to father?" he asked suddenly

In beholding her like this in the well-being of oncoming motherhood John apprehended for the first time that she must love his father and feared at once for his secret She shook her head, the sun glinting upon her golden-brown hair

"No, John, not a word You'll have to let me judge the wise moment for that" But tell me about your Rose before your father comes in "

So John tried

"I feel a little nervous of Mrs Medlicott, John She sounds tight-lipped by your description of her, and tight-lipped blondes of forty are the devil No, you needn't look at your stepmother's mouth, my dear It will never be tight-lipped "

That was true Not that generous bow *She* must have been a lovely girl Was his father when he kissed those red lips ever jealous of the wasted years? She could not be so sympathetic over Rose and himself unless she too had had a love affair once upon a time How fatuous of him to have compared her to Mrs Damson when he saw her first! Too utterly fatuous!

"What are you thinking, John?"

"I was wondering why you had not married before you met my father "

Her eyes twinkled

"No, John, you'll have to be content with Romeo and Juliet," she said, with a smile "I'm not going to indulge you with the recital of my own outlived emotions Let it be enough for you that I am now a very happy woman Tell me, would you rather I were going to give you a sister or a brother?"

"Well, perhaps a sister "

"With your present belief in feminine perfection, eh? But it wasn't a fair question, for I know you'll give a friendly hand to either Prudence or David "

"Those are the names you have chosen? Rather good ones "

"And now what about meeting your Rose? I dare say I could persuade Mrs Damsón to invite me down to the Vicarage for two or three days, and you'll have to contrive the rest But it won't do to let Mrs Medlicott suspect that you are trying to force her hand Yes, John, I suspect your future mother-in-law I'm sure she won't be nearly so tolerant as your present stepmother "

"No, really, she's very nice Lots of Englishwomen have that cold manner "

"Observed that cynical man of the world, John Pendarves Ogilvie," Elise laughed "Who was Mrs Medlicott?"

"Her name was Trotton The Trottons have a place in the west of the county "

"I'll consult my mother, who is particularly strong on the landed gentry "

Alexander Ogilvie came in at this point Yes, marriage with Elise had certainly improved him, his son decided This time last year if he had arrived without a preliminary preface of postcards and telegrams his father would have

examined him and cross-examined him and wound up with a long jobation on the feelings of the household and the necessity of less casual behaviour. Now he merely seemed glad to see him.

"This is a pleasant surprise, John. Are you lunching with us?"

"Yes, I told Watson."

"And how is the volunteering going? I had a letter from the good Damson expressing approval of your keenness, but apparently rather worried over your choice of literature. Ibsen, eh?"

"Oh, Alec, you didn't tell me! How delicious," exclaimed Elise. "Are there still people who are shocked by Ibsen? Which play was it, John?"

"A Doll's House"

"Well, I don't know that I particularly care for Ibsen," said the barrister. "It's boring stuff."

"But, Alec darling, you weren't shocked by it," his wife protested.

"No, I wasn't shocked by it. The Central Criminal Court cures one of being shocked except professionally, when one is trying to discredit a witness."

"Judges soon recover their primal innocence," said Elise. "Father who in private life is the best-informed and most broad-minded of human creatures jumps like an old maid at the Folies Bergères when he is hearing an Appeal."

"If an old maid were innocent she wouldn't jump at the Folies Bergères," the barrister pointed out drily.

"Now, don't be logical, Alec. It's too lovely a morning for logic. John, I must come down to your Vicarage and meet your Vicar. It would be perfect to meet some-

body who is genuinely shocked by the *Doll's House* In fact it would almost be like an actual scene in an Ibsen play"

Yes, married life was very good for his father, John decided once more He probably might quite easily have been shocked by Ibsen if he had not married Elise

"By an odd coincidence there's a matinée of *A Doll's House* this afternoon at the Parthenon," Elise announced, after looking at *The Times* "Would you like to take John and me, Alec?"

"No, I think I get enough stale air in the Old Bailey," her husband replied "I thought of going over to Wimbledon and having another shot at liking golf on the London Scottish course But why don't you and John go?"

"Shall we, John?"

"Rather It would be ripping"

By 1901 a performance of an Ibsen play in England had become a recognized intellectual occasion Popular audiences had given up being infuriated by the foreign dramatist and agreeing next morning with Mr Clement Scott's expression of their fury in a couple of columns of *The Daily Telegraph* They left Ibsen nowadays to the few people who really enjoyed that kind of morbid stuff and the larger minority who did not really enjoy it, but supposed that the appearance of enjoying it conferred upon them intellectual distinction The result was that the gloom beyond the footlights was not less remarkable

in the auditorium No satisfactory explanation has yet been offered why an intensive cultivation of the mind should so seldom be accompanied by even a normal cultivation of the body The audience that afternoon at the Parthenon was typical of an intellectual occasion in London There were a few æsthetic young men to recall the glories of the 'nineties before they were eclipsed by the disgrace of Oscar Wilde, but homosexuality was still under a cloud, and people were inclined to turn round and stare at them as twenty years later people would still turn round to stare at a couple of monocled Lesbians or as thirty-five years later, in spite of a large, indeed of an almost indiscriminate tolerance of the eccentricities of the flesh, people might still turn round to stare at a young man who entered the stalls of a theatre, arm-in-arm with a goat

At the same time, the intellectuals who in 1901 turned round to stare at these willowy and æsthetic young men were no doubt secretly gratified by their presence, deriving from it an assurance that their own attendance at an advanced play was a courageous assertion of their own dissociation from the common herd Those æsthetic young men were rare The rest of the audience seemed to consist of middle-aged men with gallinaceous necks rising from slightly grubby collars and dressed in dingy ill-fitting tweeds, of younger men with caseous complexions and tired hair in dusty serge or dark cashmere but equally grubby collars, of women tallowy and unpowdered in djibbahs, of weatherbeaten women in shirt-waists (who sat with their hats in their laps because they were not to be confused with the minxes who went to matinées at frivolous theatres and refused to remove their hats,

thereby providing frequent correspondence in the Press), and of equally weatherbeaten women whose dresses had the effect of curtains which had not been made for the windows they were serving and whose hair had the desolate appearance of handiwork or puzzle abandoned unfinished

"I never before saw so many ugly people all at once," John observed to his stepmother as they took their seats in the middle of the stalls

She sniffed at her vinaigrette

Avowedly to achieve the deeper solemnity of continental histrionics, but actually to save expense, there was no orchestra, so that there was no music to drown the intellectual conversation of the audience during the intervals until a lugubrious hammer struck three strokes to announce the raising of the curtain

"I think Ibsen gets right down below the surface, if you know what I mean "

"Exactly You have exactly expressed what I was telling them at our Literary Society last week It is the sub-soil of human nature in which he digs "

"Oh, Mr Sprules, what a wonderful comparison!"

"And in doing so starts a crop of thistles on which the borgewar prick their fingers "

"Oh, I think that's too wonderful, Mr Sprules I suppose you're a great admirer of George Bernard Shaw?"

"I consider him our only dramatist "

"I'm so glad you think that, Mr Sprules, because I think that, and I do get so *much* hostility from the *average* person "

"Ah, the average person "

"I don't really think Pinero is in the front rank, do you?"

"No, because Pinero always sacrifices life to theatrical effect. His talent is a moth which continually sings itself in the footlights."

"Really Mr Sprules, you *are* so witty."

"Whereas Ibsen and Shaw always sacrifice the theatrical effect to life."

"How d'ye do, Mrs Blewitt? Rather a wonderful afternoon so far, don't you think?"

"Oh, how do you do, Mr Culpeper? How clever of you to recognize me!"

John nudged Elise to draw her attention to the large woman thus recognized.

"You might as well call it wonderful to recognize Mont Blanc from Geneva," he whispered.

"I think Nora is so good, don't you? Let me introduce my daughter, Mr Culpeper. This is her first Ibsen play, and she is so thrilled."

"It's frightfully good, isn't it?"

"And it's very encouraging to see such a well-filled house."

"You know, I believe the taste of the public is definitely improving."

"But I don't think Ibsen will ever be really popular in this country, do you?"

"Oh no, I think he will be spared that humiliation."

"Let us hope so. Let us devoutly hope so!"

The lugubrious three strokes with the hammer warned the house to be silent, and as the intellectual audience settled itself for the second act, there was diffused upon what air there was in the theatre a faint mustiness of humanity.

Elise sniffed again at her vinaigrette

• "I think it's rather a stuffy play," John declared at the fall of the final curtain "And yet it's fascinating in a way "

"Like the *petite vie de province* it relates," said Elise

"I hope you won't walk out on father like that," he laughed "You know he used to be a bit like Nora's husband "

"Oh no, not really, John "

"You've improved him extraordinarily I wish I could remember better what he was like with my mother He was awfully like Nora's husband with me "

"You must remember, John, that children are terrifying You frightened him I shall be frightened of David, I expect And even more frightened of Prudence I shall rely on you to make a bridge "

They were waiting outside the theatre for a hansom to drive them to Buszard's A *matinée* in those days not rounded off with a richly variegated tea was incomplete Suddenly John caught sight of Mrs Stern and Emil His father had never suggested a meeting, and John believing as he did in the resemblance between Mrs Stern and his mother had been rather glad But he could not let pass this opportunity of introducing Elise to her

"Of course, John, I should love to meet her We'll invite them to tea with us "

He pushed his way through the crowd to where the Sterns were standing

"John! Who would have thought of meeting you here this afternoon?"

"I'm with my stepmother And I want you to meet her "

Miriam Stern hesitated a perceptible instant. One of the charms of John's company was his detachment. To meet the second Mrs Ogilvie might spoil that detachment. Besides, a woman could and probably would divine the potential relationship between them.

"But won't Emil and I be *de trop*?" she demurred.

"No, no. She wants to meet you."

So presently they were all in a four-wheeler jogging toward Buszard's, and John was asking Emil if he had liked the play.

"I saw it in Berlin four years ago. It seemed very dated, I thought, this afternoon."

John noticed Elise dart a quick look at his friend, who was out of jackets now, but who still appeared no more than fifteen. He must explain to her afterwards that Emil really was an unusual youth. She was probably thinking him a most ghastly little prig.

"No doubt when it was first produced about 1880," Emil went on, "it seemed revolutionary. And I dare say it did let a little air in among the horsehair furniture, but I think Nora ought to have been wearing a bustle this afternoon."

Miriam Stern no doubt felt that her son's air of antiquity must be sounding rather absurd, for she came to his rescue by chaffing him.

"Emil dear, what do you know about bustles?"

"I remember when you wore one. I can remember a thing like a small birdcage, and I remember the bustle of that nurse we had when we lived in Kilburn. It was a pale-blue half-moon stuffed like a cushion, and she used to hang it over one of the knobs at the foot of her bed. But anyway, would I have to remember what a bustle

actually looked like to know that Nora should have been wearing one if the effect of *A Doll's House* was to come off? I wouldn't have had to see a farthingale to know that you couldn't walk on the stage as you're dressed now and expect to carry off an Elizabethan discussion of domestic morals "

"I'm not sure I agree with you there, Emil," John put in "I'm not sure if it oughtn't to be one of the tests of a great play that it should be independent of externals "

"Exactly That's exactly what I'm trying to point out," Emil retorted "I think Ibsen is doubly limited as a dramatist, first by the essential provinciality of Norway and secondly by the period in which he was writing It's impossible to believe that human nature will ever again attempt to falsify life as it falsified it during the second half of the nineteenth century, when almost everybody ceased to believe in God but continued to worship habits derived from an assumption of God's existence Ibsen was engaged in sweeping up husks, and that's no occupation for the greatest art "

"But why talk of him in the past? He's still writing "

"Nothing contemporary of any contemporary value Did you ever read that dismally ridiculous play *Little Eyolf*? Or the play he brought out last year—*When We Dead Awaken*?"

John confessed ignorance of both

"Well, if you'd read them you'd know that he had said whatever he had to say of any value at least ten years ago "

"I think you're being much too sweeping, Emil," his mother put in "*John Gabriel Borkman* is a superb play And when you condemn him for his provinciality and

nineteenth-century limitations please remember *Peer Gynt* and *Brand* and even *Emperor and Galilean* ”

“I’m glad you qualified the last one with ‘even’,” said Emil

“But *Peer Gynt*” his mother pressed

He shrugged his shoulders

“That’s what he always does when I drive him into a corner,” Miriam Stern explained to Elise

“I’m afraid I sympathize with that shrug I’ve never been able to get on with *Peer Gynt*,” the younger woman declared

“Just a pretentious pantomime to most people outside Norway,” Emil went on “But no doubt a work of profound symbolic importance in its own country That’s where I admire English literature Nobody tries to be symbolic—probably because nobody in England would respond to the significance if any English writer tried It is an extraordinary thing, if you meditate upon it, that no modern country has had so many great poets and that no modern country has produced so few readers to appreciate what they have written No country is less musical and yet in proportion to its capacity for appreciation no country has honoured musicians more extravagantly ”

“Extravagantly?” John questioned

“A knighthood is an extravagant honour for a nation which thinks so much of titles But it is Sullivan who is knighted, not Gilbert ”

“What about Tennyson and Leighton? No musicians have been created peers,” John pointed out

Again Emil shrugged his shoulders, and further argument was cut short by the cab’s arrival at Buszard’s

There the necessity of choosing from the rich selection of cakes prevented its being renewed

"Why does no private house ever run to teas like this?" John demanded "I've never been to tea with a duke, but I don't believe even a duke would give me a tea like this"

"If a housewife might be permitted an observation, John," said his stepmother, "the cause is the unfortunate tendency of cakes to become stale You could not have as much variety without an economically unimaginable waste"

"The best cakes I ever ate," John said reminiscently, "came, I think, from Doncaster There was a fellow at school who had an uncle or something"

"An aunt probably," put in Elise, with a smile

"Well, some kind of relation, and he or she used to send him some cakes called Othellos, Desdemonas, Iagos, and Cassios They were about the size and shape of a cricket-ball The Othellos were chocolate outside with a sort of chocolate squash inside, the Desdemonas were white with a creamy squash inside, the Iagos were yellow with a custardy squash inside, and the Cassios were striped red and white"

"What was the squash inside them?" Emil asked eagerly

"I can't remember," said John in a tone of profound regret "I always ate them fourth, and by that time one was feeling rather gorged"

"I remember some glorious cakes at a *pâtisserie* in Lyons," said Emil, taking up the pæan "And some of them cost no more than two sous There was one made of a kind of greenish marzipan in the shape of a basket

with flowers of cherry and angelica, and there was another with cream divided by chocolate "

"You see, he's human after all," Mrs Stern claimed, turning with a laugh to Elise

When the tea-party was over John was eager to hear from Elise the impression made on her by his friends

"I expect you thought Emil rather dogmatic for a kid, but he's older than he looks In fact he's almost seventeen now "

"Did you say seventy?" Elise laughed "But no, of course, I realize he's exceptionally precocious "

"It's not showing off," John assured her "He's perfectly natural I don't think he bothers himself in the least what other people think provided he has a genuine opinion of his own to utter They're Jews of course "

"Yes, I had realized that too Mrs Stern is inclined to be in love with you "

"To be what?" John gasped

"To be in love with you, my dear "

"I suppose I shall hear from Mrs Stern next that you are inclined to be in love with me," John said sarcastically "Why, Mrs Stern is the same age as my mother would be now "

"That wouldn't prevent an inclination to be in love with you On the contrary it might easily encourage it "

John shook his head in despair at feminine imaginativeness

"Fortunately I've no inclination to believe you're right, Elise, or I should become dashed self-conscious with poor Mrs Stern You must remember she was the first woman older than myself whom I had a chance to confide in "

Elise hesitated Then she said quickly

"It was a silly thing to say, John. Forget it. I was only half in earnest. Women do say silly things like that."

But she could see by her stepson's increasing pre-occupation that the suggestion was beginning to puzzle his mind. He was thinking over the letter Mrs Stern had written to him about Rose and remembering Fontainebleau and, while telling himself all the time it was absurd, beginning indeed to wonder if conceivably Elise could be right.

"John, John, please don't think any more about what I said. I could kick myself for it. Ascribe it to maternal jealousy. I expect I was wishing that I had had the chance of being your first confidante. You have been so very sweet over my marriage to your father, so good indeed that no doubt vanity was pricking me on to search for the explanation in myself rather than in you. I was wanting to suppose myself as indispensable to you in your way as I am proud to believe myself indispensable to your father in his. Probably I'm equally wrong in both respects. It would do me a world of good and serve me quite right to find your father was having an affair with a woman younger than I am."

"You won't find that," John prophesied. "In fact I don't know how he ever managed to risk his dignity by proposing to you. It must take a deuce of a lot of nerve for a man of his age to propose to an attractive woman twenty years younger than himself."

"He ran no risk and he needed no nerve, John. I chased him shamelessly. And John, please, please think no more of my idiotic remark about Mrs Stern."

Nevertheless when John went round to dinner at Claremount Gardens that evening he could not forget

what Elise had said, and he blushed when Mrs Stern asked him suddenly across the candle-lit table why he was looking at her with so many questions in his eyes

"Don't worry, John You and Emil are going to get your talk together after dinner, and then later on we can have our talk," she told him

And again his cheeks crimsoned He hoped she would assume it was on account of Rose

"Couldn't we have some music?" John in his embarrassment suggested

"Ha-ha!" Julius ejaculated derisively "Thanks very much and all that, but I'm not performing at home nowadays So you won't have to try to think of the right thing to say about a lot of fiddling which has bored you to death"

"Julius, I'm not sure that your manners are very attractive," said his mother

"They're jolly offensive," observed Emil

The younger boy winked at John

"My beloved mother and my *adored* brother have entered into an alliance to squash me since the unqualified success of my winter concerts—ahem—see notices by all the leading cloth-eared critics of the Press"

"And I really don't think, Julius darling, that you're being terribly amusing," his mother told him

"I really didn't think I was myself," Julius agreed, with another wink at John "And couldn't I have some more of this soufflé, please, seeing that my *adored* brother guzzled half the cakes at Buszard's this afternoon?"

"You'd have guzzled all of them if you'd been there," Emil jeered

"I believe you are perfectly right, Mr Stern Oh

good, here's the soufflé I love my brother with an E because he will be eminent one day—perhaps I hate him with an E because he's excitable I shall take him to the East and feed him upon éclairs and Epsom salts, and his name is Emil ”

“I love my brother with a J,” Emil retorted, “because he is junior I hate him with a J because he is a Jew I shall send him to Jericho and feed him upon the jawbones of asses and jalap, and his name is Julius ”

For the rest of dinner the conversation did not escape from this slightly irritating atmosphere of schoolboy banter, and Miriam Stern was glad when Emil and John retired to Emil's small room at the end of the front hall, and she carried Julius off to ~~that~~ grey drawing-room with the curtains of sea-green velvet Julius demanded to know why this was not considered the right moment for talking over his butterfly collection with their guest

“Because Emil and John want to have a talk together, dearest boy ”

“Like two old gentlemen in a first-class smoker,” Julius observed

Although he let her persuade him he was inclined to sulk when he and she reached the drawing-room

“I'm not going to be treated as a kid indefinitely,” he announced

“No one has any such base designs against you,” his mother assured him “But you must remember that John is Emil's friend, and that if you were older you would, I hope, have the tact to recognize that for yourself ”

She spoke a little sharply, not so much because she was really worrying at all over the interruption of Emil's talk with John as in anticipation of her desire to eliminate both

Emil and Julius from her own talk with him later on this evening. She felt certain that John's young stepmother must have penetrated to the inspiration of her interest in John. Woman did not deceive woman. All she was wondering was whether she had said anything about it to John himself.

"You don't feel like playing the Grieg sonata?" she asked her son. Impatience to know what Mrs Ogilvie had said about her made the thought of reading *The Speaker* or *The Saturday Review* unbearable.

"No, I've decided not to play that musical nougat at my next concert."

"But I thought you were liking it."

"I like nougat in the right mood."

A sudden sense of his ungraciousness overcame the boy.

"What I *would* like," he said, taking her arm and drawing her to the piano, "is for you to play to me."

"What for instance?" she asked gratefully, because she had been feeling that if she sat down to play of her own accord the uneasiness of her mood would communicate itself to Julius and spur him into some dismaying observation.

"I think I'd like you to play *Carnaval*."

"Twenty minutes at least," she reminded him.

He flung himself at full length upon the wide sofa beside the fire.

"That's a very good time," he proclaimed.

Miriam Stern seated herself at the black Steinway grand strung to concert pitch and really too brilliant for this Hampstead drawing-room, but chosen to compete with Julius and his Carlo Bergonzi violin. As almost

always Miriam Stern was dressed in black, and when she raised the lid of the keyboard and ran her white fingers over the keys the effect was of a slim mistress of the *haute école* trying the paces of a great ebony horse

"Can't you play it without the music yet?" Julius asked incredulously when his mother opened the volume of Schumann

She shook her head and began

PREAMBULE *how long would Emil and John stay talking downstairs? Would Emil resent her suggestion that John wanted to talk to her alone? Would he suspect her interest? Ah, no, not if John had been talking to him about this girl What was the time now? Only half-past eight She could not send Julius away to bed until ten*

PIERROT *it was ridiculous that she should not yet have conquered this infatuation Was it merely sexual desire? What mysterious irony in the mysterious universe made it possible for a woman to loathe physical intercourse with a man, and yet adore the fruit of such intercourse? Poor Ernest had always known she hated that side of their married life She had tried to hide her disgust She had tried to be the dutiful woman of the Orient whose greatest privilege in life was held to be ministering to the desires of the man who had chosen her No doubt Ernest was superficially Occidental, Occidental enough to be more hurt than angry by her inability to abandon herself to his love-making a wrong note*

"Sorry, Julius!"

yes, Ernest had been hurt She had denied his pride even the perfect fulfilment of marriage He had remained even then a second violin in the orchestra, jealous of the two sons he had produced . . . a sickly jealous man with hungry

eyes *and always a little grubby . . . another wrong note*

“Julius, I’m playing atrociously”

and so surreptitious in his amorous advances

ARLEQUIN *I love you, John I love you, John I love you, John I love your clear grey eyes I love your slim brown hands I love your clear-cut mouth and your sidelong smile and your manner half sly, half debonair What after all is time? Time is not disposed of by a definite question, foolish Miriam What are the first crow’s-feet? What is the first excessive softening of the breast? What are the hundred secret indignities which time inflicts upon a woman’s body? But I love you, John I love you, John, I love you, John*

VALE NOBLE *and if like somebody in an old fairy-tale I could have my wish granted I would choose to meet you at Victoria to-morrow and to leave the raw London Spring and to cross the turbulent grey Channel and to go crashing along the railway from Boulogne to Paris, revelling in the foul coal-smoke of the continental expresses and to go driving round in a fiacre through the rackets Paris streets to that quiet hôtel, and the next day to travel on southward, southward to the peach-blossom in Italy, and there to lie awake and watch the faded blue of the early morning sky, with John asleep beside me*

EUSEBIUS *but I would want another wish granted I would want to be given back the twenty years which stretch like a chasm between us He might wake from that sleep among the blossoming peach-trees of Italy, wake and by that early morning light perceive that I too was faded, not beautifully like the sky, not virginally like the sky .*

FLORESTAN . . . *but not yet, not yet He is too young yet to be critical You are too young yet, John She could spare him that disillusionment if she had the strength to be wise, the strength to withdraw from him while he still loved her, while in the wonder of finding his ardour fanned, fanned, fanned to an intensity of which as yet he could not imagine woman capable If then she had the strength to withdraw, surely neither he nor she would ever regret such a passion? She would teach him what woman was, set him at eighteen years upon the highway of life more securely, more completely, more beautifully armed than any of his fellows She would equip him by the self-sacrifice of her own passion to win more from the love of woman than any of his fellows*

COQUETTE *what could he hope to learn from this romantic infatuation for a girl of his own age? But he would not be expecting or be wanting to learn anything Just the sweet dreaming of youth* birds in the high hall-garden, Maud, Maud, they were crying and calling *she is coming, my dove, my dear, she is coming, my life, my fate, the red rose cries, 'she is near, she is near', and the white rose weeps 'she is late'* Maud is just seventeen *raum ist in der kleinsten Hütte für ein glücklich liebend Paar* yes, yes, room in the smallest shack for a happy loving pair

REPLIQUE *but to suggest that this girl was not a lyric love, half angel and half bird, would gain nothing except scorn for herself And deservedly*

PAPILLONS *this folly had been fought and vanquished last summer at Fontainebleau The summer of 1900 Those yellow butterflies he had enshrined in a casket for a memorial* not to turn them black like the butterflies in the poem *ah, yes, it was too late, yes, yes, yes yes*

"This is Papillons, Julius"

"I know"

*those yellow butterflies of Fontainebleau that
golden age of Fontainebleau*

ASCH — SCHA — (LETTRES DANSANTES) Schumann
*had fallen in love with a girl of sixteen, and had even
managed to extract a thrill from linking the letters of his own
name with Asch, the birthplace of Ernestine but he had
grown tired of his young sweetheart and fallen in love finally
with*

CHIARINA *in spite of those dancing letters, he had written
this music for Clara Wieck before he had admitted to his
own heart that he loved her, while still he fancied himself
in love with sixteen-year-old Ernestine*

CHOPIN *what warmth in this episode! what
suave moonlight upon the music!*

"How charming this part is, Julius!"

ESTRELLA *but this was lovely too, this music for Ernestine
Ernestine would be nearly eighty if she were still
alive dear, dead women, with such hair, too, what's
become of all the gold used to hang and brush their bosoms?
sixteen-year-old Ernestine was dead anyway*

RECONNAISSANCE *and this eighteen-year-old Rose, she
would die within a year these young loves of Spring
were brief as the blossom of the orchards, as the blossom
cut by the East wind of Spring Yet leaving fruit behind
Brief but not therefore barren*

PANTALON ET COLOMBINE *age and youth if
Clara Schumann had loved the youthful Brahms?
Egeria! sweet creation of some heart which found no resting-*

*place so fair as thine ideal breast but the young Brahms
had wanted no ideal breast for resting-place the music
Clara inspired was the music of a passion overcome, and any-
way he was in his mid-twenties when poor Robert Schumann
was in the asylum and Robert's wife was not yet
forty fifteen years between them, not twenty, and those
twenty the long rich years of youth*

VALE ALLEMANDE *a German waltz indeed, that dance
of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms while poor Robert
was in the asylum suicidal, so much afraid of music
now that a bunch of keys could send him into a paroxysm
yet, John, I would dance a German waltz with you if you
asked me and forty is so young when one is nearly
thirty-nine*

PAGANINI

"Here's your old friend, Julius "

"Paganini ?"

"Yes "

"It's a pity he never taught Schumann how to write
decently for the violin "

AVEU *if she should tell John to-night as frankly as she
had been telling herself that she loved him? that young
stepmother of his must have known, and curiosity must have
made her press John to find out what he thought of that Jewish
woman yes, that handsome Jewish woman for
I am still beautiful and I desire the perfection of human desire
while it could still be beautiful*

PROMENADE *the seduction of youth, that was a game
which goddesses alone could play with dignity with
dignity with dignity and what did dignity
matter in bed?*

"Mother! What *are* you playing?"

"Some disgracefully wrong notes I am so sorry, Julius! My mind was wandering from the music"

PAUSE *this was madness he loved this rose-pink
English girl with her dogs and her horses and perhaps
to horrify him by trying to change their relationship would
mean that she would lose this boy, this boy, this boy, this boy
for ever last summer was gone où sont les neiges
d'antan? Où sont les chaleurs d'antan it was
then she should have flung dignity away too late
now*

MARCHE DES DAVIDSBUNDLER *she must not let him
down that young stepmother would step so neatly into
her place beside him she was the real rival to fear, not
this strawberry and cream girl because after all, even
though she had allowed this lunatic passion to be fanned to
life again by jealousy, their fundamental relationship was
idealistic, and that must not be destroyed No! No! No!
That must never be destroyed Never! Never!*

"You marched against the Philistines with great determination, mother," said Julius as she rose from the piano
"Twenty-four minutes I timed you Let's play piquet till the conference of the two old gentlemen downstairs is finished"

"And so," Emil was saying to John, "you've decided to become a normal Englishman Oh, well, that was inevitable when you became a volunteer"

John felt grateful to his friend for accepting the obviousness of his falling in love with Rose. At least he appreciated the difference between this love and his love for Connie. It did not strike him that Emil like himself was a year older.

An hour later, he was feeling equally grateful to his friend's mother for the way she was understanding so perfectly his love for Rose. Sitting with her there in that grey room with the sea-green velvet curtains, he felt tempted even to confide in her his apprehensions about the effect on Rose of the physical revelation involved in marriage. The silence of the Hampstead night broken very occasionally by the faint clip-clop and jingle of a hansom in Fitzjohn's Avenue encouraged intimacy, and if Mrs Stern had not expected him to be frank she would not have bothered to disembarass their talk of Emil's presence.

"The chief thing I dread is the strain of a long engagement," she was saying. "It's easy to talk about self-control, but "

She broke off the sentence, and the unuttered conclusion seemed to be flopping round the room like a heavy bat in search of a resting-place.

"I shall always have self-control, Mrs Stern. I think I know what you mean, but if you knew Rose you'd realize that that " he stumbled. It was pretty difficult to find words for what he was trying to say.

"What should I realize, John?"

Her voice was velvet.

"Well, I should be too much afraid of shocking her "

"Der Liebe vermindert die weibliche Feinheit und

verstärkt die männliche I think it was Jean-Paul who said that It wouldn't be a bad idea for you to choose, Jean-Paul Richter for your German reading Could you follow that quotation?"

"Not very well "

"It means 'Love diminishes feminine delicacy and increases the delicacy of man' But that won't make the strain less severe on both of you "

John blushed It seemed presumptuous to tell a woman like Mrs Stern that she could have no conception of the ethereal delicacy, the sublime innocence of a girl like Rose Besides, one could not talk about things like that even to a woman as worldly-wise as Mrs Stern

"You are old enough, John, not to blush at the simple facts of life," she was saying now in that voice of velvet Sea-green velvet curtains grey walls slim tall figure in black a white hand resting upon a piece of silver brocade thrown across the arm of the high-backed settee fine red bow of a mouth upcurving in an ironical smile, but a tenderness in her dark eyes that took from it the least hint of mockery

"I know what you mean, Mrs Stern, but if you saw Rose " he stumbled again, and was silent

"I should find her immune from the emotions which waken a girl to life? If I really thought that, John, I should not be quite so willing to listen to your rhapsodies Now don't think I'm being cynical when I tell you that whatever your emotions may be, hers will be very much the same It is youth's privilege to believe that its emotions are unique You might say that the greatest wisdom which experience teaches is the amount of our emotions we share with other people And will you remember that,

John, when I repeat that I do dread the strain of a long engagement?"

"Well, naturally I would give anything to be married now. But that's like wishing to fly to the moon," John sighed.

"You see, at present, you are living emotionally on the knowledge that your Rose exists. In that state of exaltation nothing else matters. It is now like one of those imaginative loves of the Middle Ages which were possible when the world was younger, or rather when our particular Western culture was younger. I include myself in that because, though I am a Jewess without as far as I know a drop of Gentile blood in my veins, I have moved further and further away from our strict racial traditions and taken to myself Western eyes from which I regard the rest of the world. Those great imaginative loves of the Middle Ages were not then the peculiar privilege of youth, as you know. But when the world began to grow up rapidly again with the experience of a former culture to mature it, those imaginative loves could not maintain themselves against the pressure of what was seeming reality, of what perhaps was reality, and such imaginative loves were denied to all except the young and seldom granted to them, and even when they were granted it was only for a little while. The moment must come, John, when the exaltation roused in you by the idea of Rose will turn to the consuming ardour of complete possession. You will be horrified at first by what you will think of the sully of your ideal of Rose by your own base passion, but if she loves you it will be too late. You will have set her on fire too, and to quote our friend Jean-Paul again, 'Ein liebendes Mädchen wird unbewusst kühner'. She may be

utterly innocent, utterly ignorant The normal feelings of a girl will be beyond her control She loves you, and in loving you she will without knowing it grow bolder There is nothing which spurs passion like artless virginity Remember that in the confidence of your self-control And it's then that the strain upon your emotion will begin The notion of surrendering will outrage your sense of decency Every hour you spend with her will be no satisfaction for the tormenting hours you spend apart from her, and the almost inevitable end of this spring rapture will either be that you but, John, I had not meant to play Cassandra to-night Tell me, this Rose of yours occupies your mind utterly?"

"Well, I don't think about anybody else "

"John, you're not hurt by what I've said?"

"Not a bit, because I know you've only been saying it to help me "

"John, that is the sole reason You must always believe that I could not bear to think that one day you should look back at the two of us talking here in this quiet room on this evening of the first March of the new century and explain my motives otherwise "

"Of course not "

John felt that she was wanting him to say more than that, but the memory of what Elise had observed to him about Mrs Stern's friendship for himself recurred with a weight of embarrassment He would do anything to avoid the slightest discussion of motives Elise's idea had been fantastic, but nevertheless nevertheless, what? Nevertheless, he was acutely aware almost to the point of discomfort of the isolation in which he and Mrs Stern were lapped around by this quiet London night

"And now we must make a plan for me to meet your Rose Why shouldn't I take a cottage for the Easter holidays somewhere in your countryside?"

There flashed across John's mind the very place—a thatched half-timbered cottage midway between Paxford and Milbourne He had noticed a 'to let' board leaning over the gate under an arch of yew Volunteering would easily provide him with an excuse to stay on himself at the Vicarage The letters 'p s' after his name in the Army List could wait for a month Rose was going to stay with an aunt in London during May He could 'pass schools' then It would make the barrack-square at Chelsea and the rigours of a drill-sergeant of the Coldstream or Grenadiers a positively agreeable 'experience' if Rose were near

"But will Emil and Julius like being down in Loamshire for the Easter holidays?" he questioned

"I'm sure they'll love it," Mrs Stern decided firmly on behalf of her sons

And, although John was not aware of exercising the least subtlety by that question, he broke by it the dark charm of the March night and brought himself and Miriam Stern back into normal existence

"You're going down to Loamshire to-morrow?" she asked

"To-morrow evening I'll bicycle over on Monday and find out about a cottage I know of one about seven or eight miles from where I'm living Would you come down as soon as school breaks up? That will be in about a fortnight Easter Sunday is the seventh of April"

They parted in a pleasant atmosphere of holiday plans, and when John was gone Miriam Stern went up to her

elder son's room He was reading *Das Kapital*, resting upon his elbow in bed

"This is tremendous stuff, you know," he assured her "This is a revelation of the human mind "

"I wonder if it is," said his mother "I used to know Karl Marx when I first came to London as a girl He was always kind to children and cats The Marxes used to live in a dreary little house in a dull small street somewhere on Haverstock Hill He seems to me a very large man as I look back at him, a large man with a very large head and a mass of dust-coloured hair like Struwwelpeter And there was a daughter Eleanor who was always called Pussie—no, no, not Pussie, Tussie She had frizzy hair, too, like her father's Poor Eleanor, she ran away with a man who had left his wife, and then he deserted Eleanor, and she killed herself In spite of the kindness of Mr and Mrs Marx it was a sad household Tussie was almost the last child left of a large family most of whom had died young when the Marxes were living in great poverty in Soho years earlier Yes, it was a sad household "

"But you never read *Das Kapital*?" Emil pressed

"No, I don't think I'm much interested in economic revolutions they won't cure the emotional muddles of humanity, will they? Emil," she went on abruptly, "I've just been suggesting to John that we should spend your next holidays down in Loamshire "

"You want to see this girl, eh?" Emil asked, darting at her a bright glance

"Yes, I should like to meet her Wouldn't you, my dear?"

Emil closed *Das Kapital* with a thump and lay back on his bed staring at the gas-moon on the ceiling

"I don't see why we should mix ourselves up with this business," he said at last "John is moving away from us steadily all the time Certainly, in my heart I never thought he would move in any other direction Last year when I was a year younger "

"Poor old gentleman!"

He brushed aside her raillery with an impatient, yet somehow not in the least a discourteous gesture

"Last year I played with the romantic notion of a perfect union between a Gentile and a Jew, a union so perfect that the incompatibility of centuries would at last be wiped out But I misjudged him I thought that he had depths, but I don't believe there are any depths in John "

"Northern blood like his makes for a protracted development If he matured with your speed, Emil, he would not be the John we love "

"Whom *you* love, *ma mère* I no longer love him It is perfectly clear that he is going to take the conventional road of the average young Englishman Whether he marries this new girl or not doesn't matter He will be forever searching to find his *alter ego* in that kind of girl I could tell that from our talk to-night He talked about this girl in the way English people of his kind talk about nature To such an Englishman nature means a simple landscape with all the denizens of which they are familiar The first cuckoo, the first swallow, the nightingale in May, the song of the robin in September, that wild west wind which is the breath of autumn's being But we're moving swiftly toward a world in which all that kind of agreeable triviality will no longer mean anything at all In another year there will hardly be an emotion, an ambition, or an

interest which John and I shall share in common Why then should we keep up this pretence of friendship?"

"Emil, this sounds not unlike the very familiar old emotion 'of jealousy'"

"You say that because you yourself are feeling jealous of this girl, *ma mère* Now don't look at me as if I were an *enfant terrible* If John is old enough for you to fall in love with him, I am old enough to tell you that you are in love with him And, mother, who else is to tell you?"

"There is something inhuman about you, Emil"

Miriam Stern hoped that the pleasure he gave her by his recognition of her feeling for John was well concealed She railed at herself for being as absurdly gratified by it as a schoolgirl, but she could not help it

"Or excessively human," her son added

She knew she ought to deny the assertion, but she could not bring herself to do so She found a way out with a quibble

"I'm not in love with him, though I admit that"

Emil was too quick for her

"That you love him"

"I'd really rather that you did not talk about it, Emil You can rely upon me not to make myself foolish or undignified"

"Well, naturally, I know that, or I should not have said anything," he assured her "I wish I could have the experience of falling in love with a woman like you I wonder what you would feel about it if I did"

"I wish you could fall in love with a woman old enough to transfer to you her knowledge of human nature Indeed, I wish you could fall in love with some girl in the old-fashioned way of youth"

Emil flung *Das Kapital* to the foot of the bed, and leaned back, nursing his head in his hands, and staring up at the ceiling

"That I shall never do The very thought of girls fills me with rage "

"But why with rage?"

"Oh, I don't know, they're such hopeless brakes on progress All women are Well, perhaps not all women, but such a huge majority as to make the generalization sound enough And if ever they show signs of progressive ideas it is always for the wrong reasons However, I suppose their mental coma wouldn't irritate me if they were not physically so abhorrent All that softness "

"It won't do for me to suggest that you may think quite differently three or four or five years hence Perhaps you won't, in any case Still, not even the most understanding of mothers can avoid feeling a little dismayed at the thought that she has been responsible for bringing into the world a not perfectly normal male "

"I'm not reproaching you," Emil interposed

"I understand that What I dread is that one day you may reproach me I wish I had known more people who were constituted like you I am speaking from intuition rather than experience when I say that I am sure they are seldom happy "

"Don't bother about me I've made up my mind to frame my life in such a way that I can shut passion out of it "

"A bold decision!"

"It could only be achieved by a bold decision The more difficult it is to carry out, the easier will it be for me to defeat my own weakness You know that I was as

madly in love with John as in one way of love anybody could be. Much of last year was an agony to me. I was being burnt up by desire. I ached perpetually with jealousy. Never to the end of my days shall I feel the least sensitiveness over the attitude of the world to the Jew, for all that could be suffered from such sensitiveness I have suffered already, since at the back of my mind I was always convinced that had I not been a Jew he might have responded. I was sick with thwarted hope when he had that absurd infatuation for that first girl, but it was the beginning of the cure, for when at Fontainebleau he confided to me about his having slept with some French cafe concert girl I recognized that it was not because I was a Jew that he could not love me, but because he was normal. You see, he was quite famous at school for his affairs with other boys, and I did not realize that this was the normal course of adolescent vitality, the mere exuberance of a healthy youth. With John it was not even the temporary bisexuality you often see in adolescents. He just took his boys as a right to which he was entitled by the prowess of schoolboy personality, which you know is very like the prowess of a Diomed or an Achilles or any other Homeric figure. In a way I shall be sorry when public-school education is reformed and such an Homeric existence is destroyed. But that's by the way. Well, when I realized John was normal, and could never love like myself for that reason, I recovered from this sickness. As you know, *ma mère*, when you look back at being in love it is very much like looking back at chicken-pox or measles."

"Is this intended as a warning by an experienced old gentleman to ladies approaching middle-age?" Miriam Stern asked.

"No, no, no I'm not suggesting that our cases are parallel If you want me to be sincere, I'll tell you straight out that I do think it's a little ridiculous for a woman of your intelligence to suppose she is in love with a youth like John Ogilvie, but "

"Yes, but unfortunately, dearest Emil," his mother interposed, "the last faculty which has any effective say in the question of love is the intelligence "

"Precisely, and it was just the consciousness of that which pulled me together I want to see the world ruled by intelligence instead of by emotion as it is at present And if I can master emotion while I am still young, think what a difference that will make to me in the future "

"As long as you are sure of being able to master emotion without destroying the ability to feel but that will also be decided in the future," she added, with a sigh for her own thoughts "In any case, Emil, do not bother about me You will not find your mother incapable of managing her emotions with the dignity she owes to her elder son "

"You need not be sarcastic," he said, smiling "After all, it's only because I am your son that I feel any confidence in my own strength of mind And, *maman*, since we have both loved the same person, doesn't that prove we have more in common than even our relationship might warrant us in supposing?"

"Yes, Emil, but the difference between us is that although I have decided I will not allow myself to regard John as anything except a friend in order not to make myself ultimately ridiculous for certain, and ridiculous at once in all probability, I am not therefore going to regard his friendship as nothing And I shall repeat that your

intention to break up your friendship with John is a sign that you have not conquered what is probably the most influential emotion of all—jealousy ”

“But I am not going to break up this friendship deliberately I was simply confiding in you my knowledge that it could not last John and I must diverge further and further away from one another We differ too profoundly in essentials I have a positive creed I believe in mankind I do not believe in God John wants to believe in God, and if he finally succeeds in persuading himself that he does that will put us still further apart In fact we shall be living to all practical purpose on two different planets An emotional bond between us might have been strong enough to hold us together in spite of mental divergences I have realized the impossibility of such an emotional bond I have accepted it Surely it would be as false a sentimentality to play with our friendship as it would be for a young mother to prefer playing with dolls instead of looking after her living children? You have nothing except the difference of your age between you and John to bother about ”

“It is enough,” said Miriam

“Yes, for a love affair between you and him, but the difference need not interfere with your friendship In one way he satisfies your maternal emotions much better than either Julius or myself Actually you understand him better than you understand either of us Julius is beyond even me at present, though I’m inclined to think that if he lives he will become fairly ordinary I don’t see any sign of creative genius in him, but I think it’s too soon to give a positive opinion ”

“And you are a creative genius?” his mother asked

"Yes, I think I probably am I fancy I am an early example of the way genius will manifest itself in the new age You still think of genius in terms of past achievement and aspiration It is bound up with art in your mind Now I believe that art is finished, or at any rate the art of the Occidental epoch which began with the Renaissance I may be only a forerunner of the new epoch born so far from my own real time as to be passed over as a mere eccentric On the other hand, if we look at history we seem able to discern a kind of general law that new epochs are heralded by mighty events, and I feel in my bones that we are now on the verge of mighty events and that I shall have a chance to use my genius practically in my own time "

"In what way?"

"Oh well, unless I know what the events are it's impossible to answer that question But, to express myself roughly, I hear myself as a voice expressing a vast group-consciousness I think that the genius of the future will be expressions in one individual of vast groups The artistic genius of the past has expressed himself as an individual, and the more potent the genius the more potent his influence over the mass mind but progress has developed the mass mind to such an extent that it is beginning to demand influence over individuals instead of surrendering to being influenced by them, and the genius of the future will be the servant not the master of that mass mind The fact is that humanity is becoming convinced of the futility of looking for another existence after death which is to compensate for the failure of mortal life to guarantee happiness and comfort to the great majority of human beings, and in abandoning the

superstition of immortality humanity is being gradually fired with a determination to make the best of this world for everybody in it ”

“But wasn’t all this yeast rising over a century ago—before the French Revolution? What were Danton or Marat or Robespierre except the expressions of a mass mind?”

“They were in the long line of popular tribunes There is less difference than in their names between Marius and Marat They were individuals first The voices of the new age will not be individuals I suppose the nearest I can get to express what I conceive they will be is to call them mediums ”

“A dangerous word to use, dear Emil, when we consider its associations But I have a glimmering idea of what you are getting at Have you talked to John about these speculations of yours?”

“What is the good of talking about humanity to somebody who is convinced that the whole of humanity is expressed by a girl with blue eyes?”

“Well, let us humour this luckless survivor from the romantic past,” said Miriam Stern, and the smile behind the words but softened her voice without so much as puckering for an instant the corners of her mouth “I suggested to John that we might spend our next holidays in a cottage not far from Milbourne ”

“So that you can be magnanimous,” her son commented sharply

“So that Spring can be old-fashioned,” she corrected “I have given you to the future, Emil Let me give myself to the past Besides O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst ”

Thus it befell that on many days during that April John and Rose were together

Everything had run with such smoothness that John was often suspicious of what the envious gods might be holding in store for him. His father and Elise had gone off to St Jean de Luz where the barrister felt his golf would not be as conspicuously bad as at Wimbledon and where Elise would be able to drink in Atlantic zephyrs, and drowse in the sun after heather-scented walks for the benefit of the child that was coming. Mr Damson had been delighted to agree that John should stay on at the Vicarage now and go up to London in May to take a Volunteer officer's course at Chelsea. The owner of Lowes Cottage, the widow of an A R A dead these ten years, was equally delighted to feel that by letting it she was entitled to pay a visit to her sister at Torquay. The cottage itself on the outskirts of the diminutive hamlet of Lowes was really three heavily thatched cottages turned into one by the late Walter Hipwell, with a red-tiled studio built on, the windows of which looked out through the blossom of tumbledown gnarled fruit trees to a sleepy stream winding through meadows. In front was a carefully tended small garden, bright with alyssum and arabis, the borders fluttering with daffodils in the April wind.

"My god, look at these pictures!" Emil had exclaimed, standing in an ecstasy of disgust before Oriental maidens carrying pitchers and serenading Spaniards and tarantella-dancing Neapolitans and all the highly coloured souvenirs

of Mediterranean scenery with which the later Victorians tried to relieve the stuffiness of their domestic interiors

"Don't look at them, you ass," Julius had advised

"We'd better take them down," Emil had suggested

"No, no," had come from Mrs Stern "We might not be able to put them back properly, and I should hate to hurt old Mrs Hipwell's feelings She has been so extremely obliging "

"Then we'll turn them round with their faces to the wall "

"But I don't think that an ugly emptiness is any improvement on an ugly fullness So let us leave well alone "

It was in this studio snōwbound by pear-blossom that before this crudely coloured population of motionless serenaders with mute guitars, of immobile dancers with castanets unclapped and tambourines untapped, the love of John and Rose woke from ecstasy to passion John had felt a little doubtful of the reception that a family like the Sterns would be given at Medlicott Hall He foresaw them in those time-shaded rooms like gloxinias in a Loamshire lane The return of Ralph Medlicott from Winchester to the dulcitude of home did not allay John's misgivings At this date perhaps the only human creatures capable of withstanding with dignity the stony superiority of a Winchester man of fifteen were Winchester men of sixteen and seventeen Whether even Winchester will survive the twentieth century's revolution of manners is as yet a subject for speculation, but if Winchester change the quintessence of England will be undiscoverable to future Englishmen

"It fascinates me," Emil had exclaimed when he and

John were bicycling back from his first visit to Medlicott Hall "I begin to understand now why rich Jews yearn to become country gentlemen "

"You and Ralph Medlicott amused me," John had laughed "It was like an interview between Clive and some young Oriental potentate with whom he was seeking an alliance "

"I liked him," the other had admitted "There must be texture as well as design for a decent wallpaper There was no lincrusta about that youth, which was very pleasing Most of our people at St James's who try to exist in beautiful indolence when they are not playing games are just embossed wallpaper "

John was too much relieved by the friendly reception of Emil Stern at Medlicott Hall to argue about Winchester Mrs Medlicott had been cordial No doubt Ralph had conveyed to her his own approval, and it was Ralph who better than any member of the family understood how to influence Mrs Medlicott She told Emil to let his mother know that she was anxious to call upon her Two days later the Medlicott brougham stopped by the yew-arched gate of Lowes Cottage Mrs Medlicott was accompanied by Rose, to whom Mrs Stern was charming When the brief visit was over John turned to Mrs Stern

"Oh, John," she laughed "John, did ever eyes ask a question with such pathetic eagerness? you have the same expression as my beloved spaniel Don used to have when he was wondering if I were going to take him for a walk Forgive me, John, for laughing, and let's go into my little room Emil and Julius will be back presently for tea "

They left the studio, and presently were sitting, on

either side of a hobgrate, in wide-winged grandfather-chairs covered with a faded cherry and brown chintz

"Stir the fire, John There's a sting in the wind this afternoon I hope the blossom won't all be spoilt"

The sun had been shining when John had escorted Rose and her mother to the carriage, but now the bitter rain was beating against the lattice-window of this tiny room which was almost filled by the two chairs

"It's strange how the mind of a woman like that," Mrs Stern went on, "can give substance to so fugitive an occasion as a call I felt as she passed out of the door that if I turned round I should see an egg upon the mat Yet I confess that women so utterly characteristic as that do attract me There is something satisfying about their representativeness Perfection, even of absurdity, is always satisfying We have learnt to tire of Praxiteles and Guido Reni and of Raphael himself, but we should beware of being unable to appreciate all perfection You know, within the space of that call I was aware of the whole of our respective histories I was seeing some lanky long-toothed Norman kneeling before the priest with a flaxen-haired Saxon bride, I was seeing a procession of woman after woman in mediæval wimples and sugar-loaf hats, in Elizabethan farthingales and Caroline *décolleté* and Queen Anne pinnners and paduasoyes and Regency muffs and Victorian crinolines and bustles, with Mrs Medlicott's fair pompadour of the present bringing up the rear, and I was seeing myself like Ivanhoe's Rebecca and Shylock's Jessica and Leah after Leah in the ghettos of central and eastern Europe And though this may be the first year of the twentieth century I was saying to myself that she and I were still as remote from one another as when her

ancestors were fighting with their bronze swords in the dark north and mine in Palestine were much the same as my people are now, even although now they are dispersed over the globe, dispersed dispersed ”

“But you didn’t feel like that about Rose? You were so sweet to her ”

“I think your Rose is delicious, John, and I think I am odious for teasing you ”

“She liked you tremendously ”

“What did she say, John?”

Now what Rose had actually said was, ‘I think Mrs Stern is ripping’, but John did not feel that this was an adequate comment on which to build the absorbing discussion for which the egotism of enamoured youth was longing

“Well, a girl like her doesn’t know how to express the kind of fascination you obviously had for her But she did like you tremendously Did you did you really like her? I mean, do you understand why I am so madly in love with her?”

“I should be an extremely unimaginative woman, John, if I could not understand your being in love with a beautiful girl ”

This was altogether too vague for John He did not want to discuss an abstraction of femininity

“But you don’t think that Rose is just a beautiful girl and nothing more?” he pressed “You’re not disappointed in her, after what I told you about her?”

“Not in the least disappointed, John I think she will be the perfect match for you if—but oh, John, it’s a very big if—if you can weather what must inevitably be a long wearing engagement, and what will be more difficult a

secret troth at first, for I cannot believe Mrs Medlicott will agree for a long while even to an open engagement. And the worst of it is that the more perfect the match you are for one another the more difficult you will both find it "

And then to Miriam Stern's relief the boys came in. She had not found the complete preoccupation of John with somebody else quite so easy to accept without heartsickness as she had persuaded herself it would be.

One day in that April, and never had April been so exquisitely the April of English poets as this year, there was an expedition to gather primroses in Harting wood which lay beyond the orchard, beyond the water-meadows, on the edge of the undulating country that rolled away from Lowes to a far skyline. Ann Medlicott was with her sister, slim and fair as a pulled skein of raw silk. She had been captivated in the way of her fourteen years by the gipsy darkness of Julius whom she had converted from butterfly-chasing to the better rewarded pastime at this season of birds'-nesting. She was sure that if they searched the woodland they would find an early nightingale's nest. Their eager chatter died away behind the tree-trunks closing in upon their progress. They had been gone about a quarter of an hour when Emil flung down upon the grass of the ride, where the others were sitting in the windless sunshine, a bunch of primroses as large as the heart of a cauliflower.

"I'll bet that plausible rascal Disraeli never picked so many primroses in the whole of his life," he declared.

His mother suggested that he and she should go and look for Julius and Ann. They too were lost behind tree-trunks. John and Rose were left together in the empty ride.

A small bird with yellowish breast slipped through the budding hazels

"Now was that a wood-warbler or a willow-wren?" John asked

From the coppice came the bird's call

"A chiff-chaff," he decided "It always does turn out to be a chiff-chaff!"

The persistent monotonous call continued for a while Then it stopped abruptly, and the silence of the woodland was of a midsummer noon

Their eyes met their lips touched

She was wearing a light green frock, almost of the same shade as the primrose leaves round the great bunch she held in her lap

"My lovely one, you are April herself to-day," he murmured in a low voice shaken by emotion at her beauty

She smiled with her lips, but her eyes were remote as the blue of hills along a far horizon

"Rose of my heart, if we could live for ever in this wood!"

"I think I should like it"

"Would you, my treasure?" he asked eagerly

And in the way of young lovers since the world began he told her the story of that home of theirs in the fairy future, and foolish enough no doubt the tale would sound if set down here Yet when it was told upon that April day long ago it sounded to her who listened sweet and wild as the birdsong of dawn outside her window This very morning she had stood by that window to watch the thrushes run with dew-spangled feet across the grass, appearing large as partridges in the cold glimmer of day-

break, and back in bed as she lay peeping for the earliest flash of the sun to light up the framed photograph of her first pony she had fallen asleep again on a drowsy vision of John's face bending over her out of a silver frame of birdsong. She wished she could tell him this now, but she was growing somehow shyer and shyer of him.

"You would not grow tired of such a life? You would not want anything more than just to live in a wood with me and two dogs and a horse?"

"No, I'd never grow tired of it," she affirmed.

"What do you think your mother would say if I told her we were in love with one another and that we wanted to be openly engaged?"

"I think she'd forbid me to see you any more."

"But why?"

"She'd say we were too young to be engaged and that people would begin to talk about us."

"Surely your mother can afford to pay no attention to country gossip? It's really ridiculous the way we chain up our lives with other people's opinions. And what amuses me is that it's all theoretical. These people of whom we are so much afraid never dare criticize us to our faces. They may mutter scandal over teacups behind drawn curtains, but if they actually meet us the last word they will breathe is a word of criticism. At school I used to worry over what people were saying, but at least it was open criticism there, and I soon found that if you went your own way the criticism stopped."

"I wouldn't care what people said about me, John, but I wouldn't like to worry mother. And it would worry her if she heard people were beginning to talk about you and me."

"People! People!" he apostrophized "I wonder where the others are"

The woodland answered with silence, but the mention of people had populated that silence with hidden critics of their behaviour They feared now even to sit too close to one another in that empty ride lest peeping woodman or gamekeeper should see them and carry the news over the shire

John tried to take up again the theme of that house in the wood where they were to live, but the magic had departed from it The wood had become a thoroughfare People were tramping through their paradise in ever increasing crowds, and what was worse stopping to peer in at the diamond-latticed casements and destroying the poetic seclusion of two young lovers in the grand tradition of romance With so many impalpable figures trespassing upon their green privacy, it did not seem worth while to postpone for a few more uneasy minutes the return of the real people with whom they had set out upon this primrose-gathering expedition However, the others did not return, and presently John suggested that they should go in search of them

But Harting wood was apparently now empty of their presence No sound of them was heard upon the primrose-powdered slopes or along the grassy rides no sight of them was caught beyond oaken clump or green-misted spinney of young larches

"They must have thought we'd gone back to the cottage," John declared "We'd better move along"

So they hastened down through the woodland to the water-meadows, the emerald of which ever shifted as the slow shadows of the white April clouds moved across

them, and followed the banks of the stream to the orchard where the snow of the pear-blossom was beginning to be touched here and there with brown. Spring was hurrying past.

When they reached the cottage it was empty. Within the studio, where they went to watch for the others coming through the orchard, they sat as it were in a globe of crystal, so completely were they together for what was really the first time since they had met in the time of daffodils.

The serenaders and dancers, the Neapolitan fishermen and Venetian gondoliers, looked down upon them from their elaborately floriated frames. Through an open window came from the orchard the warm fluting of a newly arrived blackcap, the shriller burst of a chaffinch's impassioned song.

Their eyes met, but this time before their lips touched John had caught her to him and enfolded her in his arms. The bunch of primroses slipped from her limp hand, and soft as their fall upon the Persian rug was the softness of her when she seemed to shrink within him away from the inexorable pursuit of virginal passion. He fancied for an instant that she was nigh to fainting and held her from him anxiously to gaze at her whitened cheeks, on both of which flamed a patch of crimson. In holding her his hand was upon her breast.

"Look at me, Rose," he begged, for her lids were closed. She plucked feebly once or twice at the hand upon her breast. Then as if she could not bring herself to escape from so sweet a captivity she flung that puritan arm round him and drew him close and closer until their lips met in a kiss from which passion had torn the ethereal

mystery and awe of first love to reveal to both of them the secret of their being, to uncover their hidden desire for each other and to send their minds whirling ahead to face the grim problems of morality and the even grimmer problems of conventional behaviour

"Do you mind my putting my hand there?" John whispered

"No, but I suppose I ought to, oughtn't I?" she sighed in response

The chaffinches in the orchard gave nature's answer in bursts of triumphant song, but John took refuge in a current sentimentality

"Not if you really love me, my adored Rose And you do love me?"

"John, I do, I do John, my darling, I love you madly"

The birdsong in the orchard ceased suddenly, warily
People were coming

"You could say you were tired," said John quickly
"Lie down on the divan You're looking very white"

"But my cheeks are burning"

Passion brought subterfuge too

"Come along then We'll go round the other way, and meet them in the garden," he urged

Later, when the Medlicott girls had ridden away from Lowes Cottage in the wood-smoke blue of the April dusk, Mrs Stern called John to stroll with her in the orchard for a while before supper The pear-blossom was fluttering down Blackbirds, noisy shadows, were everywhere A thrush silhouetted against the dim afterglow of day was singing on the peak of an empty dovecot

"And do you realize now, John, that a long engagement, and still worse a long secret understanding,

will be a heavier strain upon you both than you had supposed?"

"You mean" he stammered

"I mean," she interposed quickly, "that a woman is not easily deceived and that children grow up Your Galatea has come to life"

"It was my fault"

"It was the fault of nobody except nature herself But what you have awakened, John, you cannot put to sleep again"

"I have self-restraint"

"In this cool orchard, yes in this cool orchard, talking to a woman old enough to be your mother, yes, very easily but not so easily week in week out for year after year, and least easily of all when after you have been parted you are together again And even if you restrain every expression of your love you cannot restrain the imagination of what that expression would mean to you"

"Then what shall I do?" John asked miserably "Marriage is out of the question yet for a long time We shall be lucky enough if we are married when we are twenty-one Perhaps you think I ought to give her up, Mrs Stern?"

"No, no, John, I'm not suggesting that I'm merely trying to make you realize that the immediate future before you is not quite so easy as you thought it would be Come along The candlelight is twinkling in our little dining-room"

Foolish boy, blind to what I could give you now in these April dews, to what I could give you to-night when my casement under the eaves will glow with moonshine With me you could be at peace, and I would not cling to you, John, when

the time came to let you go I would choose the exact moment to change our relationship to that of friends And what friends we could be! I who would have had the bounty of your young love could watch you for the rest of our lives without jealousy, and so in a perfection of intimacy we could stay friends always There would be no secrets between us since we would already have yielded each to the other the secrets of love As we are now I am too remote from you, John You even suppose that you could shock me

Foolish boy? Ten times more foolish woman! You should have forgotten your dignity last summer at Fontainebleau It is too late now

"Too late now," she repeated aloud

"Too late for what?"

"Too late for wandering about in this damp grass when supper is waiting for us You are very patient with my maternal fussiness, John dear But it was impossible for me not to notice this afternoon that you and your Rose had passed on to another stage in your journey of love And you were afraid you would frighten her with your masculine brutality and John, when we came in this afternoon she was as pale herself as a primrose But it was not fear, John When children wake from sleep they wake flushed The older we grow the paler do we wake from sleep And this afternoon you waked her from her last childish sleep "

Oh, why, why must I continue to torment myself with these two young lovers? I am giving them the importance of Adam and Eve

"Supper is waiting and I'm jolly hungry," Julius was calling from the cottage "Aren't you two ever coming in this evening?"

"I was looking at Venus sinking down behind the woods, and listening to that favourite thrush of mine "

"Ann Medlicott thought we shouldn't have much chance of finding a nightingale's nest with eggs before we go back to London "

"Yes, you'll be going back in a fortnight now," said John, thinking how difficult it would be presently to find himself alone with Rose "You'll manage for me to see as much as possible of her while you are still here?" he asked Mrs Stern impulsively as they reached the door of the cottage

She was grateful for his dependency, and smiled her promise to help him

But the next day came word that her husband's brother was lying seriously ill in a London hospital, and the duties of kinship overrode everything else They must go back to London at once

"You'll be thinking hard things of me, John," she said to him wistfully "But family claims are terribly strong with us Jews, and it would be unforgivable if we stayed here "

John tapped the barometer in the hall of the Vicarage after he had returned from seeing off the Sterns The glass seemed steady As long as the weather kept fine it would not be so difficult to see Rose alone But in wet weather? It would not be so easy in wet weather And the years grew longer before him He saw himself, time after time innumerable, riding along the drive through Medlicott Park, now powdered with winter's snow, now deep with the bracken of summer, now windswept by the warm south-west, sun-burnished, rain-drenched, at dusk, at noon, now frosted and silent beneath a starry sky, now

dripping mournfully in the white fogs of autumn, now hawthorn-heavy in May or bluebell-dimmed in the front of June. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, pushing his bicycle through the wicket in the stable-yard gate and leaning it against the wall of a small coachhouse abandoned to bicycles, except for the governess-cart which was still used for picnics and still pulled by that ancient white pony which looked like outliving the youth of all this present generation of Medicotts. He saw the fantail pigeons flutter lazily up to the roof of the stables, and the great clock over the archway at the far end, and the bell in the tower, and a groom in shirtsleeves with a bucket. He saw the footman slipping like a fish through the cool depths of the hall to admit him, time after time innumerable. He saw the green sunlight upon the oriels of the library, and Rose coming to greet him, now through the heavy oaken door, now across the lawn outside hurrying slightly and then falling back so as not to reach the house too far in advance of the footman who had come to announce John's arrival, for that would still have been unladylike in those days. And sometimes he saw Rose descending the wide stairs before he reached the library. Those were the best meetings, for the footman would vanish as quietly and quickly as a fish, and they would go together through the oaken door into the library. The long low library would be empty, and there they would be safely imparadised in one another's arms until the dipping flight of a bird past the mullioned windows would cleave them like the shadow of the world's sword. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, watched by Mrs. Medlicott's kingfisher-blue eyes across the silver kettle and wondering whether she was concerned about

the future of Rose and himself. He saw himself sitting on with the Squire over the port in the high panelled Caroline dining-room and hardly able to pay even the semblance of attention to tales of fox and farm and Radical malevolence, because he was counting the very seconds with Rose of which her father's geniality was robbing him, with Rose in that small Georgian drawing-room papered with Chinese pheasants and strange foliage. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, chattering rural small talk while he wondered if he should be successful in choosing the moment of departure that would grant him the chance to kiss Rose good night. Would so much anxiety endure for very long? Would the hour ever strike when he could claim her company as a right?

The Easter holidays came to an end. Ann went back to school. Ralph went back to Winchester. Mr Damson's pupils returned to the Vicarage. The cowslips were in their prime.

Yet the sweet season was passing. John and Rose by that was the fault of the change in their emotional relationship. What each now recognized in the other both feared would be recognized by the rest of the world. The dread of gossip that would reach the ears of her family made Rose afraid to risk any secret meetings, and John was still romantically enough in love to find a satisfaction in deferring to these scruples. Yet romantic satisfaction did not compensate for the pangs of corporeal deprivation. John's youth lay in the gap between two

periods. He was able to criticize the Victorian discipline of respectability, but the influence of a childhood spent under the sway of that respectability would not allow him to break completely clear of it. That ability to face hard physical facts which was to distinguish the youth of the next generation was beyond his imagination. Physical facts were still ugly. Girls in your own station of life whom you hoped to marry were not seduced. Indeed the seduction even of girls of a lower station in life was an offence against the code of a gentleman. Sexual intercourse with girls of your own station in life who had previously been seduced by cads meant that such girls had ceased to consider the possibility of marriage with anybody. Sexual intercourse with a girl of a lower station in life than your own who had been previously seduced by some cad was recognized as your prerogative, but you had to remember your gentlemanly obligations by being careful not to put her in the family way, which would mean that in order to consider yourself still a gentleman you would have to marry the girl and in doing so cut yourself off for ever from the society of gentlemen luckier than yourself.

The incident which had revealed to John and Rose that they desired each other did not reveal to them at the same time that the greater freedom which an engagement would confer upon them to play with fire would be a strain, to cope with which must be beyond their power. Neither of them grasped, and if either of them had grasped it, neither of them would have admitted that the basis of their love was now predominantly physical. The modern psychologist would argue that it always must have been, but at one stage in the development of society this

physical basis was successfully sublimated, when the great imaginative loves of the Middle Ages transcended bodily desire

Within the womb, in a darkness thick as the backward abyss of time, the human foetus passes through the evolutionary process which led to the creation of man. From the moment that a wail announces the creature's achievement of life every infant proceeds on the way to full manhood by a series of mental and emotional developments which show forth the previous history of humanity. These may vary with the individual (and the extent of masculine variety is much wider than feminine) but the process of history is apparent in everybody. For instance, the mind of the normal European schoolboy of ten works like that of a mature savage, and thus he passes on through phase after phase during the miniature existence of youth. In many cases the progress is only apparent. The physical externals of age supervene and with them the trappings of progress, but the mind ceases to develop, and the trouble is that unless this arrestation occurs early enough to make it obvious the value of an individual's experience is chiefly estimated by his age. Thus we find nineteenth-century minds administering twentieth-century states or eighteenth-century minds controlling and confusing twentieth-century finance.

In becoming aware that his Rose was a woman John passed from the mediæval ecstasy of first love to a later date in human history. That first rapture would never be his again, but by his experience of it he was individually as much enriched and enlarged as literature by the *Divina Commedia*. He would never love again without awareness of physical passion, but he was for ever safe against that

intellectual surrender to phallism which was presently to mark the reaction against the blinkered thought of the nineteenth century

Half-way through May the nervous anxiety of stolen meetings in this sly and observant countryside were brought to an end by Rose's departure to London to stay with her grand-aunt, Lady Roker. John went home for his course on the square at Chelsea. He had heard alarming tales about the experiences of self-conscious young volunteer officers during this ordeal, but he found the sergeant-instructors amiable enough in reality and the drilling of guardsmen under their supervision a much easier business than he had expected. Meetings with Rose were not quite so easy.

Old Lady Roker was the widow of a Warwickshire baronet who being without the prospect of an heir had sold his property and invested his money in the City, as the expression used to run. His affairs had prospered, and when he died in the early 'seventies he had left his wife well off. The old lady (she was now drawing near to ninety) had been much shaken by the sudden leap up of the income tax to meet the expenses of the war in South Africa. A few pence in the pound had been the rate when her husband died. It was seeming to her in this spring of 1901 that she was very near to being ruined. To save herself from this she gave up buying envelopes or note-paper and by writing back to her relations crosswise on their own letters and readdressing and sticking up the envelopes with home-made paste she felt like a heroine of adversity. It was hoped by the Medlicotts that grand-aunt Roker would leave her money between Dick and Ralph with perhaps a dowry apiece for Rose and Ann.

Consequently for many years now the young Medicotts had had to stay in turn with grand-aunt Roker at that large but extremely stuffy house in Portman Square, and when they were not staying with her to write to the old lady regularly once a week. Each in turn had fallen into disgrace with her. Dick at the age of ten had trodden on the tail of her yellow Persian cat. Ralph when twelve had knocked a Dresden shepherdess from the drawing-room mantelpiece into the grate to break the damsel's crook and chip one of her sheep. Rose had committed several crimes, the worst of which had been to entice a starving mongrel puppy into the house out of the Square and feed it with the digestive biscuits kept in a small silver keg on the immense mahogany sideboard in the dining-room. As for Ann, only last winter she had been convicted of leaving a great spatula of gas flaring away in her bedroom after she had gone down to dinner, and that at a time when grand-aunt Roker was faced by ruin. The best to be hoped after that was that Ann's dowry would pass to her brothers and not to some charitable institution which knew the value of money.

The windows of the house in Portman Square were so rarely opened that the accumulated genteel odours of the Victorian age clung to it—the faint smell of gas, the mustiness of old embroidery, stale lavender-water and eau-de-Cologne, hot roast beef, potpourri, Shetland shawls, seed-cake, sherry, soda-mint tablets, and damp ferns. The rumble of the traffic was so little audible behind the thick plate-glass of the windows as not to interfere in the least with the ticking of the numerous clocks even when they were covered with glass shades. There was one big clock in the hall which chimed every

quarter and sounded a carillon at the hour as if time itself slept in this house and had to be roused in such a fashion to remember it was passing. The servants were fat, old, and waxen-faced. No doubt Simkins the butler and Mrs Burge the housekeeper did occasionally take an afternoon or an evening out, emerging with a kind of dignified surreptitiousness from the area door and vanishing in the dusk upon their unimaginable excursions, but they seemed as integral a part of the house's construction as the mud-coloured pillars in the arched entrance-hall. Even Alice the kitchenmaid was over forty, preferring to wait until old Lady Roker passed on before she sought an engagement as a cook in what Mrs Burge promised should be the right sort of establishment, which meant just such another Victorian cavern as the house in Portman Square. Once, when Rose as a little girl was staying with her aunt, a nursery-maid had been imported to deal with the minor problems of youth, and this nursery-maid had been observed by Mr Simkins in conversation at the area gate with what Mr Simkins described as a flash-looking fellow up to no good. Ellen the nursery-maid was dismissed on the spot, and her services undertaken by Henson, the under-housemaid, who was then over forty and looked like a candle which had been left burning in a draught.

"Why has Ellen gone, Henson?" Rose had asked.

"Because girls are never any good in a house, Miss Rose."

"Why not, Henson?"

"Because why, Miss Rose, and now please stop kicking at the chair while I unbutton your gaiters."

"But I'm a girl, aren't I, Henson?"

"I hope you're a young lady, Miss Rose, and won't never forget it"

And nowadays plenty of people are still bewailing the happy days when servants like Henson were always easily available for the right kind of establishment. In 1901 Henson was head-housemaid and fifty-three years of age. She was paid £32 a year. She had saved in thirty-nine years of service £161 4s 3d. When Lady Roker passed on she hoped for a legacy of twenty pounds. Then she and a sister who was head-housemaid in a house in Wigmore Street expected to retire and buy a sweetshop in the country town which in the days of crinolines they had left for the lifelong imprisonment of good service, left for getting up every morning at six and going to bed every night at ten, left for carrying hot water and emptying slops and making beds in houses whose builders did not consider that servants were human beings at all, left for a frowsty servants' bedroom in the roof of a five-storied house one hundred and three stairs up from a basement in which for most of the year the gas was burning, left for a continuous round of tasks varied by an afternoon off every other Thursday and an evening off every other Sunday. They had their privileges, no doubt. They had the right to complain if they were asked to do what was the job of one of their fellow-servants. They had the right to protest against being given cold meat too often. They had the right to make things as disagreeable for their juniors as once upon a time their own seniors had made things disagreeable for them. They could expect at Christmas a present of a length of print or a couple of aprons or even half a dozen new caps. They could congratulate themselves when they found themselves in the

service of people of rank and fortune, not because they were any more comfortable or any better paid or any less hard worked in such conditions, but because the rank and fortune of their masters shed upon themselves a pallid radiance. And, perhaps more important than anything to their spiritual and moral health, they were never wrong, or at any rate never wrong when they had once escaped from that juniority during which they were always wrong.

In a household like Lady Roker's in Portman Square where by 1901 nobody on the domestic staff had been employed for less than fifteen years the various personalities never very distinct had merged into one. House-keeper, lady's-maid, butler, cook, kitchen-maid, head-housemaid, and under-housemaid, formed a composite waxen monster which was at once infallible and impeccable. There was also a boy who cleaned the knives and boots and emptied garbage into the dustbin. This boy, fortunately for himself, was usually succeeded by another boy after three months. It was a long enough existence. He was neither infallible nor impeccable, and he was never for a moment allowed by the rest of the household to forget that fact.

While the domestic staff swam quietly about their work like muddy-fleshed carp in a pond the mistress of that house in Portman Square sat in her drawing-room like a sea-anemone in an aquarium tank, her attenuated fingers waving gently over *solitaire* or *patience* as the rays of the zoophyte wave gently with the water's slightest movement. Often she fell into an old woman's sleep, her chin buried in the silk which was too ample now for her shrivelling breast, and looked thus as flaccid and shapeless as the anemone left behind by the ebb of the tide. And in the

manner of an anemone she seemed able to ingurgitate the life of the household by which she was surrounded. One could fancy that humanity had passed away from this old woman and that by an excessive prolongation of her fleshly existence she had reverted to an earlier form of life. There was something repulsive in the way her servants cringed upon this exigent crone for the sake of the gold her carcass would one day yield, for the sake of that gold which was to gratify for each of them the petty ambitions of a dull mortality. Lady Roker had lived so long in this atmosphere of deference that she was no longer capable of imagining the possibility of another human creature's thinking or feeling or acting independently of herself. When Mrs. Burge in black satin or chicken-headed Cummitt, her maid, read to her every day from *The Times* or *The Morning Post* about the doings of the world outside the house in Portman Square, Lady Roker used to sit back among her cushions and sniff at the incomprehensible stupidity of that world. For a long time she had recognized in Queen Victoria an egoism equal to her own and accorded to her as much respect as vanity accords to its own reflection in a mirror, but now that the Queen was dead she believed herself to be the only human being left with wisdom or even with common sense. And to express such wisdom she considered a sniff or a grunt sufficient.

"M' glasses, Burge!"

"Your ladyship's glasses."

"Simkins!"

"M'lady?"

"M' cane!"

"Cummitt! Put m' shawl straight. Cummitt! Cover me up with m' rug. Cummitt!"

"My lady?"

"You are breathing very heavily, Cummitt "

"I'm sure I beg pardon, m'lady I had no intention of disturbing your ladyship "

"I shall not be at all pleased, Cummitt, if you catch one of those unpleasant colds of yours "

"Indeed, no, m'lady I'll do my best not to, m'lady "

A sniff warned chicken-headed Cummitt that in claiming to do anything so superlative as a best she was incurring the ridicule of a being as immeasurably superior to herself as Lady Roker

It was to this house in Portman Square that John came one Sunday afternoon in May to be inspected by the old lady, the first step toward the fulfilment of a grandiose plan he had conceived to have the company of Rose to himself for the best part of twelve hours This triumph over time and the conventions of the period was to begin with dinner together at Romano's, to continue with a box at Covent Garden for *Tristan*, and to conclude with a dance at the Imperial Rooms, Kensington Even for an engaged couple to propose such a programme of dissipation would hardly have been tolerated in 1901 for a young man to suggest involving in such a programme a young woman to whom he was not engaged was unimaginable To achieve his plan John had enlisted the help both of Mrs Stern and of his stepmother It was Elise who had secured for him two tickets for the dance which was being given on behalf of some fashionable charity, and it was Mrs Stern who had invited Rose to the dance to which she was not going and to the dinner which she was not giving

Lady Roker had been extremely doubtful whether she

could allow her grandniece to go. There seemed to her many reasons for refusing, the strongest being the nervous anxiety of herself and the domestic staff of the house in Portman Square if they were left for a few hours unprotected against thieves by the bolts and chains which would have to be left undone and unfastened until Rose had let herself in with the latchkey. And the latchkey? Suppose it were lost? The notion that somewhere in London there would be somebody able to enter the house at any hour of the day was hardly to be borne with equanimity. Perhaps it would be more prudent to ask Simkins to sit up until Rose came home. Yet that was asking a great deal of Simkins. Simkins might not like it. Lady Roker herself might treat her butler like a slave, but she spoke of him as if he were an Oriental despot.

"Mrs Burge, do you think that Simkins would mind sitting up for Miss Rose?"

Mrs Burge had had a long experience of Lady Roker's methods. She knew by now the reply that was expected.

"I know Mr Simkins likes to get to bed as soon as possible after ten o'clock, my lady."

"There you are, Rose, I don't think we can ask Simkins to sit up until what time do you suppose this assembly will terminate?"

"Oh, not before five, Aunt Catherine," said Rose.

"Before what hour?" the old woman gasped. "When I went to assemblies in my young days we never dreamed of their lasting beyond midnight."

"Ah, but they began much earlier, I expect."

"They began about six, which does not seem to me particularly early, Rose."

"But this dance does not begin before ten, Aunt Catherine"

Lady Roker shook her head

"In my opinion," she declared, "the world is turning upside down Did you hear what I said, Burge? I said the world is turning upside down"

"I'm sure your ladyship is right"

"And inside out"

"There's no doubt about it, my lady"

"Well, I do not often use bad language, but I call going off to assemblies at ten o'clock and remaining there till four a beastly habit Did you hear what I said, Burge?"

"Very well, my lady," replied the housekeeper gravely

"Would you feel very nervous, Burge, if Simkins went to bed, and the front-door was left unbolted until five o'clock in the morning?"

"I think if Mr Simkins was to speak to the policeman on this beat and ask him to keep an extra special eye on us during the night it would be quite all right, my lady"

Rose darted a grateful look Her aunt grunted Mrs Burge took the opportunity of withdrawing

"I see this Mrs Stern mentions that a Mr Ogilvie is to assist at this strange nocturnal entertainment, as he is apparently a friend of yours"

"Yes, Aunt Catherine He lives near us at home"

"Your mother knows him then?"

"Oh yes, Aunt Catherine, very well indeed He's often at our place"

Lady Roker winced

"At Medlicott Hall I suppose you mean, my dear?" she said coldly "Well, I should like to have an opportu-

nity of meeting this Mr Ogilvie You can write him a little note and invite him to call next Sunday afternoon "

It was thus that John received his first love-letter from Rose She had written to him before at the Vicarage, but for the sake of prudence these notes had never gone beyond the matter which occasioned them

205 PORTMAN SQUARE,
W
May 10

My darling,

Are you glad that at last I have written that? Do you remember once in the schoolroom I wrote 'my darling' for you on a piece of paper and was afraid to let you keep it in case you lost it and somebody recognized my writing? You were so cross when I burnt it in the fire afterwards But now you are in your own house I'm not afraid

I think it will be all right about next Wednesday, the 16th Grand-aunt Roker is being as fussy as usual, but thank goodness she doesn't seem to suspect what we really propose to do The chief thing that's worrying me is that I've told her the dance doesn't begin till about ten, and now I'm afraid she'll be wondering why on earth I have to go out to dinner at half-past six!

Aunt Catherine wants you to come and call on her on Sunday Perhaps you will be able to calm her down She is a most frightful old survival She's nine years older than the Queen was when she died Don't write to me except 'Dear Rose' I wonder if Mrs Stern would be a perfect angel and write again to Aunt Catherine and say what a frightfully long time it takes to get to

Hampstead in a four-wheeler, because Aunt Catherine thinks it's bad enough for a girl to drive alone in a four-wheeler As for a hansom!' She actually suggested that her maid, Cummitt, should escort me to Hampstead which she seems to think is still at the mercy of highwaymen

It was so lovely seeing you yesterday at Mrs Stern's house Two hours alone together! Oh, my darling, when shall we be married?

I hope I have got everything right, because when I see you I forget about everything else and become so stupid

When Simkins gets the cab I'm to tell him to drive to Claremount Gardens and then when the driver has turned the corner I'm to tell him to drive to Romano's, and you'll be waiting outside for me Can it really be true that we are going to be alone together all those hours? Fancy! I broke it to Aunt Catherine that I would not be back before five But of course I let her suppose that Mrs Stern would bring me home Oh, my darling, isn't it lucky that Aunt Catherine feels she can't afford to keep a carriage nowadays? I would have been sent in charge of her horrible old coachman Bagge who was the worst of all her domestics Cummitt is not so bad though She has promised to do my hair for me I shall see you on Sunday, but for goodness' sake don't expect to see me alone for a moment Aunt C would have forty fits at the idea Oh, John, nothing will happen will it to spoil Wednesday?

I have kissed the paper here where I've left a space

*With all my love, my darling,
Your very loving*

*Rose
K*

So on Sunday May 12th, John drove in a hansom through the empty Sabbath streets of London to the house in Portman Square. The infrequent omnibuses unhampered by the week-day traffic possessed the urgency and importance of stage-coaches. The day was fine enough to bring out the first straw hats, which seemed to dance like white butterflies among the sedate toppers. Well-moustachioed clerks in frock-coats walked with all the dignity they could manage beside perambulator or mailcart pushed by wives in trailing bell-bottomed skirts and with the hanging gardens of Babylon upon their heads. Lilac and hawthorn and laburnum were in rich blossom along St John's Wood, and in Marylebone the window-boxes were already gay with pink or red geraniums and white marguerites. The scarlet pillar-boxes were freshly painted. From the windows of the barracks in Albany Street lifeguardsmen leaned out in Sunday afternoon leisure, or on the pavements they swaggered long-legged, their girls in the new frills and flounces of their spring frocks clinging proudly to their scarlet sleeves. London was the echoing dream of itself that a fine Sunday afternoon always made it, and in Portman Square the lime-trees were in full fresh green.

Yet in the hall of Lady Roker's house when the May sunlight had been excluded by the heavy door it might have been any season, any day. Time within this heavy house moved like a slippered eunuch.

Top-hat in hand, John followed Simkins upstairs to the drawing-room and walked across a tract of Persian carpet to where Lady Roker, looking in her Shetland shawl like a bundle of dead twigs shrouded in snow, sat beside a great fire of Derbyshire Silkstone coal, the leaping

flames of which in opaline reflection upon the window-panes mocked the pale azure of the sky above the roofs of the grimed houses on the other side of the Square And Rose was sitting at her feet on a wide cane-seated stool She was wearing a dress of flowered muslin which looked absurdly unreal against that roaring fire

In the moment of becoming aware of Lady Roker's presence John was seized with a foreboding that her influence upon his future would be malign At the back of his mind rang the words of the witch 'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair'

"Is this young Mr Ogilvie?" a voice croaked from the white Shetland shawl

To hear that hated epithet from the lips of this aged hag gave it a significance which was sinister enough

"And so you want my niece to gad off to this peculiar entertainment next week? Well, I suppose I'll have to let her go"

John risked a smile of relief at Rose, and was taken aback when Lady Roker said sharply

"Yes, you may well grin, young gentleman"

"I was smiling because I was so glad that Rose is able to come"

"Very likely," the old lady sniffed

After this John was put through a catechism about himself, about his family, about his present occupation, and his plans for the future, in the course of which he was given to understand plainly that Lady Roker had a profound contempt for the manners, morals, and abilities of modern youth In books when old ladies talked like this the hero usually scored heavily by standing up to them John debated the wisdom of standing up to Lady

Roker, but decided that the risk was too great. Books were books. Real life usually worked out differently.

"Well, well," said the old lady at last, "as far as I can see, you don't seem to be much more than a schoolboy, and I'm surprised your father lets you gad around the way he does."

"You were worrying, Aunt Catherine," Rose began.

"Worrying? I never worry, child. Though I have enough to worry about with the way taxation is rising. I'll be in the poorhouse yet before I die."

"You were wondering, Aunt Catherine, why I should have to start so early, but it takes a long time to drive to Hampstead, doesn't it, John?"

"Oh, it takes hours in a four-wheeler," John agreed.

"Bah!" ejaculated the old lady. "I often used to drive to Hampstead in the days when I could afford to keep a carriage and pair, and it never took *me* hours. But I wash my hands of this lunatic business. In my young days we went to balls and assemblies at a Christian hour. And young women like m'niece never dreamed of going out to dinner first. The world is upside down, young gentleman. Volunteers drilling with the Guards, eh? I never heard such impudent nonsense in my life. I'll be bound the Queen knew nothing of such pretentious monkey-tricks. No, nor the old Duke of Cambridge neither. We'll have the militia on sentry-duty outside Buckingham Palace yet."

So for another half-hour Lady Roker railed at the degenerate age into which she had survived until John rescued his top-hat from beneath his chair and prepared to make his exit.

"I'll see you at the Sterns on Wednesday, Rose "

. She nodded, and they shook hands with extreme formality

After John had walked some distance on his way back to Hampstead the right comparison for Lady Roker's hand when he held it for a moment in farewell occurred to him. It was like a piece of loofah. He laughed aloud, and a passing guardsman looked round indignantly under the impression that John was laughing at the new Brodrick cap he was wearing. These caps still struck the man in the street as ludicrous after the pill-boxes on the head of the military to which he was accustomed and which were still in general use.

At six o'clock on that Wednesday evening John was standing outside Romano's restaurant in the Strand. In the left-hand pocket of his white waistcoat was the ticket of the box in the top tier he had booked for *Tristan*, in the right-hand pocket were the tickets for the dance at the Imperial Rooms, Kensington. He was wearing for the first time an opera hat. He was wearing, too, white kid gloves, and there was another pair for the dance in the tails of his coat. The westering sun was blazing in a golden fume above Charing Cross, but from the direction of Temple Bar an east wind was blowing sharply. Down the narrow Strand the omnibuses at this crowded hour of the day were moving along at a walking pace, with an occasional five minutes of congested cessation altogether—red omnibuses going to Hammersmith, blue omni-

buses going to Fulham, white omnibuses going to Putney, green omnibuses going to Victoria, yellow omnibuses coming up from Whitehall bound for Camden Town, chocolate omnibuses, maroon omnibuses, orange omnibuses, violet omnibuses Sixpenny lilac tickets, fivepenny buff tickets, fourpenny green tickets, threepenny pink tickets, twopenny blue tickets, penny white tickets thick as confetti by the edge of the pavement Double stamp and double ring of the conductors to start Piccadilly, Sloane Street, High Street, Broadway! Piccadilly, Sloane Street, Brompton Road, Putney Bridge! Piccadilly, Sloane Street, King's Road, World's End! The conductors of the empty omnibuses going eastward hardly bothered to shout they were keeping their breath for the morning when the westward-going omnibuses would be silent

John began to feel self-conscious under the glances of the big commissioner outside Romano's He decided to risk Rose's premature arrival and stroll a short way along the Strand At the Lowther Arcade he turned aside from the crowded street to look at the windows of the toyshops in the dingy glass-shaded quiet within Then he had a sudden conviction that Rose had arrived at Romano's and was now standing bewildered in the gilded entrance-hall So he pushed his way back against the tide of people surging westward along the pavement and found to his relief that Rose had not arrived Or had she arrived while he had been marking time in the Lowther Arcade and in dismay at not finding him gone back to Portman Square? His face must have reflected the stress of his emotion, for the big commissioner asked him if she was late

"No, I'm early," John explained, blushing "There wasn't much traffic on the route I drove by "

"Came along pretty quick, sir, eh? That's always the way of it when you aren't pressed But something 'll have to be done about this traffic, and no mistake about it A proper disgrace it is to London Last night about this time there was a block further along by Terry's Theatre, and which without a word of a lie was twenty blooming minutes by the clock Well, I mean to say where are we when excuse me, sir, one minute "

The commissioner broke off to hold a basket shield over the wheel of a hansom with one hand and with the other assist to the pavement a beauty of the Gaiety chorus, a tall blonde who with a lace parasol guarded across the pavement the creamy roses of her complexion against any malefic rays lingering in the early evening sunshine

"Did you book your table?" he asked of John when the beauty was safely inside and the hansom had moved slowly away "Ah, you have That's all right, because with the season well on us we're very full before the theatres now "

It was a quarter to seven when Rose arrived The commissioner, whom by that time John felt as if he had known all his life, hurried forward to open the door of the four-wheeler, but discreetly left to the young man the privilege of handing his young lady out of the musty strap-scented interior

"Darling, I was beginning to be afraid you weren't coming," John sighed when they were seated on either side of a small table in the gallery upstairs

"Oh, John, so did I! What do you think? At the last moment Aunt Catherine sent word up to my room that

she had decided it would be better after all if Cummitt drove with me up to Hampstead ”

“Great Scott, how did you dodge her?”

“Why, I told Cummitt to ask Aunt Catherine for her fare back, because there’s nothing Aunt Catherine hates like being asked for money Cummitt didn’t want to She’s frightened to death of Aunt Catherine But at last she went, and she came back presently to say her ladyship had changed her mind and thought that as it wouldn’t be dark by the time I got to Hampstead I might go alone And then the cabman was deaf, and I simply couldn’t make him stop at first That’s why I was a quarter of an hour late And he was most frightfully disagreeable when at last I made him understand that I didn’t want to go to Hampstead but Romano’s He said it was messing him about to fetch him off the rank for a fare to Hampstead and then go somewhere else He was so disagreeable that I gave him half a sovereign ”

“Gave him half a sovereign?” John gasped “But I gave the old brute five bob as well ”

“John, you didn’t!”

“Oh well,” he laughed, “what does it matter? I would have given him all I had in the world to bring you to me But look here, you must let me pay you back that ten bob ”

“I won’t ”

“Darling, please ”

“No, John ”

“But you must ”

“I won’t If I’m such a coward that I have to bribe an old fossil to turn round his ramshackle conveyance in Baker Street, that’s my funeral Don’t let’s argue any more at our first dinner together ”

"As a matter of fact it will be just as well to be a little late," said John "We're less likely to see anybody we know, and we'll go before the end of the opera You've never been in one of those boxes on the top tier?"

"I've never been to Covent Garden at all I've never been to an opera at all"

"I've only been to one *Traviata* But they say that *Tristan and Isolde* is the most wonderful love music ever written That's why I thought we'd go to that together," he murmured And across the crimson shade of the lamp their eyes met in a glow

The sun had gone down when they came out of Romano's, and the wind blowing down the Strand struck coldly on them

"Hansom, sir?"

John smiled at the commissionaire as he nodded, and while he was holding the basket shield over the wheel he slipped a ten-shilling piece into his disengaged hand Such a tip balanced matters over the frowsy old cabby who had driven Rose from Portman Square

"Good night, sir Tell him Covent Garden Opera House? Right, sir" Then he saw that what he had supposed to be a sixpence was gold "Excuse me, sir, you've "

"No, I haven't," said John quickly He closed the apron, and as the cabby whipped up his horse he saw through the window the big commissionaire on the kerb gazing after them with a broad expression of benevolence

Who that has closed the apron of a hansom round himself and the girl he loves and caught her hand within his own an instant later will not understand Dr Johnson's wish to spend his life driving in a post-chaise with a pretty

woman beside him? And who with that experience of a hansom will not envy Johnson the closer intimacy of a post-chaise? And who in a few more years will know except from the assurance of the printed page what it was like to drive with a beloved woman or girl even in such a comparatively modern vehicle as a hansom?

The foyer of the Opera House breathed the air of mystery it still breathes on late arrivals. The attendants had gathered to whisper among themselves in groups. A door was very quietly opened somewhere to let the sound of distant music escape for a moment before it was closed again to intensify the silence of the thickly carpeted stairs up which could be seen the backs of a few late comers, as it were apologetically ascending. It was a hushed world of curtains and mirrors and powdered flunkies, no mere foyer of a fashionable theatre, but the threshold of the Sleeping Beauty's palace. John and Rose walking up stair after stair, and then following the attendant along a corridor for a mile it seemed past closed doors, felt that they were gaining the most remote spot on earth, and when at last they reached their box and the door was closed upon them the peak of Everest could not have provided them with a sharper awareness of their severance from the world.

It was not a great performance of *Tristan and Isolde*. The divine Ternina would not be singing *Isolde* until June, and poor Van Dyck as Tristan was too obviously depressed by the plainness and woodenness of the German soprano whose name may rest unrecorded among the mercifully forgotten. And since it was not a great performance John and Rose may be forgiven for staying far back in the box and letting their own passion float upon

the music in a wordless perfection of abandonment while the hours passed, may be forgiven for slipping from the box in the middle of the *hebestod* that they might leave the Opera House before the curtain fell and so escape curious eyes in the slow exodus of the audience

"My dress is frightfully crushed," said Rose, catching sight of the pleats and tucks of her new white organdie frock in a mirror as they passed along the corridor by the help of which she straightened the Empire half wreath of pink rosebuds and ivy in her glinting light brown hair

"You'll be able to tidy yourself when we get to Kensington," he reassured her "But don't be a very long time, because it's twelve o'clock already and the night is tearing past "

They did not talk much in the hansom driving westward, for the exhausting ache of aroused desire was heavy on both of them Her head was on his shoulder, her hand in his The sharpness of the May air gradually revived them, and by the time the hansom was passing Kensington Gore they had begun to think that perhaps after all it would be better to have supper before they started dancing

"And please don't be ages tidying yourself," John begged of Rose again when she left him in the lobby of the Imperial Rooms to seek the cloakroom

The ten minutes she was away were dealt with by John philosophically He reminded himself that the sooner she came back the more swiftly would travel by the hours that were left of this poignantly brief night

Rose rejoined him very soon

"You look marvellously cool and collected," he assured her

"I'm looking as white as my frock And so are you," she added

"It's because we're both hungry We had dinner so early, and we were both too excited to eat properly "

A smile trembled for an instant upon her lips, and as it vanished a faint blush tinged her cheeks lest John should divine the thought at which she had smiled

"Yes," she said quickly, "it's because we are hungry "

"If only we were married," John sighed in her ear as they moved along toward the supper room

She turned her head and looked him full in the eyes

"Oh, John, I wish we were! I do wish we were I never thought love would be like this "

"You don't you wouldn't be happier if we if we hadn't let ourselves forget everything except being together in that box at Covent Garden ?"

"No, I don't regret anything, but I wish we were going to be married in June I'm afraid it's going to be a strain I'm beginning to understand now why older people make such a fuss about things "

John was silent He too could understand why older people made a fuss about certain things, but it would have struck too hard at the foundations of his mental security to allow the slightest reason to any of the actions or opinions of older people In the first year of the twentieth century age was still as solid-seeming and impregnable as the Bastille before Camille Desmoulins launched the Paris mob against it to find how weak it actually was In the first year of the twentieth century the abyss between age and youth seemed for ever incapable of being bridged Age was not merely the enemy of youth, but an enemy so well armed that it must always win Nevertheless, the

joy of youthful love was sharpened by the difficulties. Those who were one day to sigh for the delights of the years before the war and clothe them with an imaginary richness of emotional adventure would forget that nothing is so destructive of romance as liberty, and that it was the lack of liberty which had provided the romance.

"Thank heaven there's nobody here to count the dances you're having with me," exclaimed John as with Rose in his arms he swept into the whirl of waltzers. And this is almost my favourite waltz *Lustige Bruder*

nous sommes les Cziganes de Waldteufel, nous buvons dans les cafés " he sang softly in Rose's ear. Who was it that had sung those words to this tune? Why, it was Odette at Geneva last year. "I heard a French girl singing that once." Did he hope that Rose would be inquisitive enough about that French girl to give him an opportunity of tormenting himself and her with the narration of that episode? Was he fool enough to desire to add a deliberately contrived emotion to the already overcharged emotional atmosphere of this May night? But she asked him nothing, and grateful to her sweet confidence in him he held her closer, swirling onward to the unbroken rhythm of the dance. Oh, god, to hold her waist like this! No wonder the Greeks invented the fancy that maidens loth could be transformed to trees. Only the slim trunk of a sapling quivered with life like a girl's waist. "I wish one didn't have to wear gloves when dancing."

"My dress is crumpled enough, John," she murmured.

And in the memory of those hours in the dim background of the box on the topmost tier up to which the music had come surging, her cheeks crimsoned, and as if

fearful that others in this whirling gilded ballroom would read in her face that memory she let her head droop upon John's shoulder

"Rose, your hair burns me like fire "

They waltzed round in silence for a while

"Look at that bouncer reversing," he exclaimed presently

Rose looked up with contempt in her glance for this breach of ballroom decorum comparable at this date to such outrageous conduct in the hunting-field as riding over hounds And let the modern readers who laugh at this absurd old-fashioned prejudice remember that it was the ultimate triumph of reversing which killed the waltz

"John," she gasped, her hand clutching his shoulder "It's my brother Dick!"

"Reversing?" John gasped incredulously

"No, no, but over there dancing with that girl in the chiffon dress He saw me "

"Well, I expect he'll think you're with a party "

"Yes, but if he asks me whom I'm with? I can't say I'm with you, John There would be a most frightful row Everything would come out Mother might write to Aunt Catherine What fearfully bad luck that Dick should be here to-night! I thought he was down at Aldershot "

"Well, we may not run into him If we do you'll have to say that we're with Mrs Stern as Lady Roker thinks "

"John, I'm sure we ought to slip away "

"But it's not two o'clock yet We've at least another couple of hours Besides, we may not meet him "

Rose let herself be persuaded, but the night was spoilt for her The thought that from somewhere in the room

her eldest brother might be regarding her and wondering who was the young man with whom she was dancing every dance made her so nervous and self-conscious as hardly to be aware whether she was dancing waltz or barn dance or polka

"Don't hold me so tightly, John Don't hold me quite so close, John John, please please don't look down at me like that Suppose Dick should see us?"

Thus she chided him through dance after dance until he exclaimed irritably that he wished they could run into her brother and get it over

"After all, even if I haven't happened to meet him at the Hall, he'll soon realize that I know your people quite well, and if we say we're with Mrs Stern we must trust to luck to get away at the end of the dance without running into him again "

"But older brothers are always so difficult, John And since Dick has been in the Hussars he seems to think of nothing but what is the correct thing to do Oh, why *did* he come here to-night?"

"It's a good job he didn't go to Covent Garden and see us in that box "

"Oh, he wouldn't have gone there He simply loathes music I wonder who that girl was he was dancing with She's sure to ask me if I'm going to be presented next month You see, I'm not really properly out, John It's all too frightful John, I'm sorry to be so feeble, but I think you must take me home I think perhaps I'm too tired to grapple with the situation And it *is* nearly three o'clock "

"But I'd counted on our driving home together in the dawn," John protested in dejection

"No, John darling, we must go now I'll meet you in the entrance lobby Oh, I do hope Dick won't take it into his head to be there just when we go out "

But fate ruled that this was exactly where Dick Medlicott did take it into his head to be

"Hullo, Rosie, I caught sight of you once or twice in that squash "

"I saw you once, Dick Dick, this is John Ogilvie You haven't met him He's staying near us at Milbourne "

Dick Medlicott gave a nod of maddening condescension, and curled his little light brown moustache

"I didn't know you were going to dances in London yet, Rosie," he said

"I've only been to this one Mrs Stern had some tickets, and as it was a charity I didn't think mother would mind my going "

"Who's Mrs Stern?"

"It was her party "

Dick Medlicott looked round to be introduced

"Well, as a matter of fact she's just gone, Dick "

He raised his eyebrows, and Rose plunged desperately

"One of the girls was faint, and John offered to drive me back to Aunt Catherine's, so that Mrs Stern could drive with this girl straight back to Hampstead in her carriage without going round by Portman Square "

Dick Medlicott twirled his little moustache

"I suppose I ought to relieve—er—Mr Ogilvie "

"Damn him," thought John And aloud he said coldly, "The hansom's waiting, Medlicott, Rose is tired "

Dick Medlicott blinked

"Well, perhaps you'd better drive her back as it seems

to have been arranged so cleverly I can't very well tell the party I'm with that my young sister requires her brother's escort But look here, Rosie, I don't think this kind of behaviour is good enough "

"There's going to be a frightful row about this, John," said Rose miserably when they left the Imperial Rooms behind them, looming chill now as a great iceberg against the paling sky

It was close upon four o'clock when the hansom reached Portman Square A sharp east wind was whipping the tender foliage of the trees in a colourless dawn

"Perhaps it will be all right," said John as he stood on the pavement waiting for Rose to unlock the front door

She shook her head, kissed the tip of her finger as a kiss of farewell for him, and was lost behind the solid Early Victorian portal One could have fancied that the slim figure in the organdie balldress passed through like a ghost

John's apprehension about the future was not allayed by a letter from Rose two days later

205 PORTMAN SQUARE,

W

Friday

My darling John,

A telegram has just come from mother to say she wants me home at once I'm afraid Dick must have told her about you and me I feel rather hopeless about everything I hope you'll pass at Chelsea all right You mustn't think I don't love you because I'm feeling a bit depressed about the future It's so awful being only eighteen You mustn't write to me, but when you are

The Four Winds of Love

back at Milbourne next week you'd better come to tea as if nothing had happened and then we shall know the worst

*Your loving
Rose*

It was not a letter which augured much power of resistance in Rose to the aggression of family life. John's heart sank when he read it. He could not bear to confide in Mrs Stern. He dreaded a sympathy which would imply a criticism of Rose. From the start Mrs Stern had tried to warn him of the difficulties ahead. And when she heard of Dick Medlicott's interference she would be bound to suggest the unlikelihood of his ever being accepted by Rose's family as the right kind of person for her to marry. However sympathetic Mrs Stern might try to be he should not be able to help being suspicious of her sincerity. In her heart she would rejoice because in her heart she believed that this love of his was a folly of youth. And it would be nearly as futile to confide in Elise. She would be sympathetic enough, but it would be the kind of sympathy one gets for losing a valuable tiepin or failing in an examination. In fact it was impossible to confide in anybody about love. Where was it he had read that love was an egotism of two people? It was some Frenchman. *L'amour est un égoïsme à deux*. Even if two people had exactly the same pain they would not be able to share it. Each of them would always be thinking his pain was the more severe. Love, and only love, could split one's ego in half and mend it with another's ego. In the first elation of his love for Rose he had talked about it as if it was an unique experience in the history of humanity, demanding

for it a respectful attention from two women who no doubt had smiled at his self-importance. Besides, it might be unjust to take it for granted that Rose was going to surrender so easily. He had probably been rattled by her brother's cold assurance of manner. That was what Dick Medlicott would have aimed at doing. He could not use his sabre, so he would cut his opponent down by a cavalry insolence of manner. Yet with the senior subalterns in his own squadron he would be as humble as a fag. What did he care what his sister did unless her behaviour exposed him to the mockery of his fellows? If he had really supposed there was any harm in her going to that dance he would not have been in such a hurry to get back to his own party, leaving her to find her way home without his big brother's chaperonage. And he had had the cheek to say he did not think her kind of behaviour was good enough.

Ten days later John satisfied the examiners that he was capable of handling a company with sufficient skill to be granted the letters *p s* in small italics after his name in the Army List as a token that he had passed schools. The terrors of the square at Chelsea were behind him.

The Vicar of Milbourne was particularly gratified by John's success, so unusual was it for him to be able to congratulate any of his pupils on having passed an examination.

"It's really very satisfactory, Ogilvie. Very satisfactory indeed. And I think things are going very well in South

Africa too. A great pity the Queen could not have lived long enough to have that consolation at the end. Yes, they are going well. Sir Alfred Milner would not have come back otherwise."

"Yes, we are all really very proud," added Mrs. Damson. "And our sale of work was such a success last week. We made thirty-two pounds four and sevenpence halfpenny clear when all expenses had been paid, and it was a most enjoyable afternoon. The Vicar's little speech was a great success, but we missed Rose Medlicott. I had counted on her help with the flower stall. I always think her one of our prettiest girls."

"Wasn't she there?" asked John in a desiccated voice.

"No, she's gone to Switzerland with Mrs. Beadon—that's Mrs. Medlicott's eldest sister. Colonel Beadon is with his regiment in South Africa—yes, to Switzerland. I believe they expect to spend most of the summer there. So nice for dear Rose, and of course very nice for poor Mrs. Beadon who lost her only boy at Spion Kop."

"Ah yes, those black days at the beginning of the war," said the Vicar a little unctuously. "Still, everything is going splendidly now, and with this splendid Unionist majority the country can count on safely garnering, yes, garnering all the fruits of victory. So our splendid young men will not have laid down their lives in vain. I see that W. L. Courtney has just coined a splendid word for the disease which attacks our radical sentimentalists. 'Boeritis' he calls it. Witty, very witty."

John decided to ride over at once to Medlicott Hall and find out if this sudden departure of Rose was the result of that fatal evening hardly yet a fortnight ago. Damn her brother Dick! Damn all stuffy conventions!

Damn everything and everybody! Was one living in the twentieth century or the Middle Ages? It was a pity Dick Medicott had not been sent out to South Africa and been well, no, not killed of course. No doubt Mrs Medicott would suppose that he would funk going to the Hall. No doubt she thought he would be glad to slip out of the whole business like a dog with its tail between its legs. And he did not intend to make excuses, either. He would tell her mother that he loved Rose and ask for their engagement to be recognized. Mrs Medicott might be able to frighten Rose, but she should not frighten him. And if Mrs Medicott refused to listen to common sense he would tackle the Squire.

John rode furiously on his Rover between hedgerows of withering hawthorn, with hatred for this fresh green landscape from which Rose had been untimely snatched. It was among these bluebell-drenched woods that he and she had planned to walk, and now the perfume of them blown on the breeze smelt sickeningly of emptiness. The drive through the park to the house was strewn with fallen chestnut-blossom which muted the faint crackle of his tyres and intensified the forbidding silence in which the great house brooded before him. Here on a happier day he might have seen Rose with Rudy and Speed coming to meet him across that meadow which was now garish in the sunlight with a myriad useless buttercups.

The footman believed that Mrs Medicott was at home, and led the way to that long low room whose oriel looked out upon the stretch of lawn where by the moonlight of not yet three months ago he had first met Rose picking daffodils. The tick-tick of a Dresden clock on the mantelpiece, the peck-peck of a canary in a cage were all that

broke the silence when the footman went out in search of Mrs Medlicott. He had waited in this room once or twice for Rose herself, watching for her through the oriel to come in from the garden across that wide lawn, watched her trying not to hurry lest William the footman should be left too far behind in her eagerness and afterwards criticize that eagerness in the servants' hall. No Rose could possibly come over that lawn this afternoon. She was away beyond the Eiger and the Wetterhorn, sitting now perhaps at tea in that very hotel in Grindelwald where he had been sitting a year ago. She was away beyond the Channel, beyond France, beyond the Bernese Oberland—in Lucerne, it might be, walking by the sunny lakeside, on the Rigi perhaps, hearing cowbells tinkling in the mist, on the Stanserhorn, gazing down from that platform into the dark bottle-green water two thousand feet and more below, at Interlaken, sipping coffee in the dappled sunlight, or even in Geneva itself, gazing at the mountains beyond the silver lake and perhaps agreeing with that detestable aunt of hers how pleasant it would be to have tea outside under those clipped acacias exactly where a year ago he had drunk those three maraschinos.

Ah, here was William coming back, and behind him with the last of the tulips in her basket Mrs Medlicott herself. She looked more unapproachable than usual in that floppy wide-brimmed straw hat.

"I'm so glad you've paid me this visit, Mr Ogilvie. I was wanting to see you."

Her kingfisher-blue eyes were fixed on him, and before the hardness of them John's bold intentions began to waver.

"I think I had better tell you at once that I was not at

all pleased to hear about Rose's recent escapade with you in London I know you are both very young, but you are both old enough to be able to realize what might be the repercussions of such a foolish business "

"It was entirely my fault, Mrs Medlicott," said John

"Oh no, not entirely Rose is as much to blame as you She knew that she was not properly out and that even if Mrs Stern had asked her to go to a charity dance at the Imperial Rooms she should have explained to her that my permission was necessary "

"But Lady Roker knew," John pointed out

"Did Lady Roker know that you and Rose went to Covent Garden first?"

So Rose had given that away Oh well, perhaps it was better It would all be difficult enough without the embarrassment of lies

"That was entirely my fault," he declared

"No, not entirely, though I think it was unpardonable of you to give Rose an opportunity of making such a complete fool of herself However, I do not propose to dwell on your folly I've no doubt you realize it yourself by now Nobody knows about the Covent Garden part of the business except myself, and I don't propose to make it public Help yourself to bread and butter, will you? I'm sure I can count on your saying nothing about Covent Garden "

"Of course not, Mrs Medlicott "

"I expect you have already heard from Mrs Damson that Rose has gone to Switzerland with my sister She will be away at least a couple of months, and I have asked her to give me her promise that she will not write to you

I should like you to give me the same promise with regard to her ”

“I don’t know her address But surely I may write her one letter ”

“Not one, Mr Ogilvie ”

“But we love each other !”

Mrs Medicott’s kingfisher-blue eyes rose above the silver kettle to transfix John

“I had not found it difficult to guess that you were beginning to find one another’s company congenial But *how* old are you ?”

“I shall be nineteen next October ”

“Yes, well, in spite of that you are at present eighteen, which is an even more ridiculous age than nineteen to talk about being in love with a girl of your own age ”

“I don’t see how age matters if one is really in love ”

“Unfortunately the world pays a great deal of attention to such a trifle ”

“But I want to marry Rose ”

“Indeed, and when ?”

“I suppose when we are both twenty-one ”

“Two and a half years hence Do you really think that you have a right to ask a girl like Rose to be engaged to you for the two and a half uncertain years of . upon my word, I had almost said childhood ?”

“But if Rose is willing ?”

“Rose may be willing, but her mother has to think about Rose’s future I’m afraid I shall sound sadly cynical, Mr Ogilvie, when I ask you on what you propose to live when you are twenty-one ?”

“I shall have between three and four hundred a year of my own, and I expect my father would add something ”

"Even if your father doubled your income it would not be a great deal. However, if you and Rose are still as much in love with one another two and a half years hence and are still determined to marry, it is obvious that you will do so. Meanwhile, however, I'm afraid I shall have to make it a condition that you neither see one another nor communicate with one another until that time. I should be a very foolish mother, Mr Ogilvie, if I allowed my daughter's future to be handicapped by a boy and girl love affair of which you are surely honest enough and intelligent enough to admit that the only test possible is time."

"But if we do not see one another or write for a year, couldn't we be engaged at the end of that?"

Mrs Medlicott shook her head.

"Two and a half years is the shortest time I will allow. You see, I must be frank with you, and say that I should call it a rather disappointing match for Rose. And so I'm being quite brutally frank. I want to do everything I possibly can to stop it. If the unexpected happens two and a half years hence well, I suppose I shall have to make the best of it."

"And Rose has agreed to this?" John asked dully.

"Rose could hardly do anything else."

"But didn't she tell you that we loved each other?"

"Yes, I will give you that amount of gratification. At the same time she realizes how horribly indiscreet she had been, and she was perhaps not sorry when I found a way out for her by this Swiss plan."

John longed for the courage to shake off the fetters of decency and tell Mrs Medlicott that she had no right to tear asunder two human beings who had already discovered

by their bodily senses that they were meant for one another

I have kissed your daughter into a woman Forbid us to write Forbid us to see each other Chatter your rubbish about youth and prospects and incomes of eight hundred a year being insufficient But you cannot take away from me the memory of her breasts You cannot take away from her the memory of my hand I wish now that I had exercised no check upon myself, but made her mine completely You think that Rose is still unaware of what marriage means You think that you have only to indicate an eligible suitor and that she will take your advice But I have taught her more in a few weeks of what life means than you have taught her since she was born And you have no right to assume that we are a couple of children who do not know our own minds and tear us apart like this You are horrified to think that we went to Tristan and Isolde together, but what would you be if you knew that for hour after hour while that phrenzied music of passion was surging up to that dim box she and I were except for her ultimate virginity phrenzied lovers ourselves, not stage lovers but pale and shaken by passion Indeed if it had not been for my gentlemanly cowardice, in what matters most we could consider ourselves married already Your cold-eyed son was horrified to find his sister waltzing with somebody who was not in the cavalry, but what would he have felt if he could have seen us in that dim red box at the opera? He couldn't have twirled that away with his little moustache

Alas for such brave thoughts, what John actually said was

"Very well, Mrs Medlicott, you can stop Rose and myself from seeing one another or writing to one another, but I hope you can't stop us loving one another "

"I'm not counting entirely on myself for that, Mr Ogilvie Do help yourself to cake No? You've made a very poor tea, I'm afraid "

"I think you should let us write one letter," said John reproachfully

Mrs Medlicott shook her head, and for the first time that afternoon there was a faint sparkle of warmth in her cold kingfisher-blue eyes

"One day you will look back to this talk of ours, and you will say to yourself how kind I was, considering how much reason I had to feel most excessively annoyed "

John was thankful he had refrained from discussing his anxiety with Mrs Stern or his stepmother He would at least be spared the humiliation of trying to explain away Rose's surrender He took care, however, not to go up to London, and spent most of his time working at sonnets in a dusty arbour of jasmine which had been built and planted by some earlier vicar of Milbourne in a far corner of the garden John was under no illusions about his verse He recognized it to be a literary exercise of the same kind as those sets of verses in Latin and Greek which had played such a conspicuous part in his education The first years of the twentieth century were not favourable to poetry Young men were depressed by the overwhelming achievement of the past, and although mentally disturbed by the feeling of change in the air they were still unable to perceive any new road along which poetry could progress The reaction against the art of the previous decade had already begun, but it was a negative reaction which inspired no substitute Events in South Africa had finally discredited Rudyard Kipling with the younger generation

The cynical exploitation of the war by the Unionist party which was ultimately to receive the sharpest political chastisement ever administered by the British electorate was still five years away from being punished. The country seemed a rubbish heap of the Victorian era which would never be cleared up, and poetry does not find rubbish heaps fertile soil. The mental state of the young man at the beginning of the twentieth century might be divined from his belief that the future lines of English prose had been laid down by George Meredith. John wallowed in his mental superiority to an old-fashioned reader like the Vicar of Milbourne when the latter expressed himself unable to appreciate the richly involved rococo of *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*.

John in that jasmine arbour grew more and more firmly convinced of his inability to say anything in verse about star-crossed love which had not already been said much better before. The final proof came when he discovered to what an extent even Tennyson had anticipated him. His mother's early reading of the *Idylls of the King* and *The Lady of Shalott* had prevented his being too openly scornful of Tennyson at literary discussions, but the reaction against him was too severe for any young man to be unaffected by it. Now one day he turned over the pages of *Maud* in a slim faded green volume he had taken down from the top shelf of the Vicar's bookcase.

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
Has not his sister smiled on me?

John tore up what he had written about Dick Medlicott. Tennyson had said all that was necessary about interfering brothers. It was no use writing about Rose

unless he could set her above Maud It would be better to fail with hundreds of others over Helen or Cleopatra

So the summer days passed in squeezing emotion to fit rhymes instead of discovering rhymes to express emotion Rose would not remain always in Switzerland When she returned fate would decide the future It was lucky that he had been caught by that sudden whim to join the Volunteers He would take care not to put in any of his drills with the Oxford bugshooters, it should be imperative for him to spend a good deal of every vacation in Loamshire in order to fulfil his military duties

One day at lunch the Vicar read out from his paper that Lady Roker had left almost the whole of her fortune to the British Israelites

"Is Lady Roker dead?" John exclaimed

"Yes, she died suddenly at the beginning of the month I'm afraid this disposition of her money will be something of a disappointment to the Medlicotts"

"Indeed, yes," Mrs Damson agreed "It was generally expected that all she left would go to them, and I'm sure it is badly needed What did you say she had left it to, George?"

"A society devoted to spreading the belief that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the ten lost tribes of Israel dispersed in the eighth century before Christ"

"I would accept that without question," John declared "I shouldn't think that such a belief required much subsidizing"

He could not help feeling pleased at the disappointment which old Lady Roker had inflicted. If Rose had inherited any considerable amount of money from her Mrs Medlicott would have considered him less eligible than ever.

At the end of July John left for the annual camp at Aldershot with his battalion which with the 2nd V B Loamshires, the 1st V B Huntingdons, and the 1st V B Duke of Cambridge's Light Infantry made up the South-East Midland Brigade.

It was a strenuous week both of work and play. Parades, inspections, camp routine, marches, and sham fights from six o'clock in the morning until dinner, and after dinner a long night of amusement which a few of the subalterns would usually keep up until dawn.

The week's training was to wind up with a tremendous mimic battle in which thirty thousand of His Majesty's auxiliary forces would be engaged. It happened that the previous evening was the guest night in the Mess, and there was a representative gathering not merely of volunteers but of regulars too, including a couple of Horse Gunners whose richly gold-laced mess-jackets seemed to belong to the time of Wellington. John was watching the guests gather in the mess anteroom with Tom Pownall of the Stanstead company when he suddenly caught sight of the yellow-striped overalls of the 17th Hussars. His pulses quickened. Was that "

"Hullo, there's Dick Medlicott," said Pownall. "He's evidently going to celebrate the happy occasion with Henry Falconer."

"What happy occasion?"

"It's a secret for the moment or at any rate

it's not formally announced yet I think Henry Falconer wanted to get this camp finished before it was announced, but between you and me he's just got engaged to Rosie Medicott "

For a moment the brilliant medley of uniforms seemed to turn black John felt his knees giving under him He hastily swallowed the gin and bitters he was holding, and at that moment the band outside started a gay tune The Colonel was leading the way in to dinner John joined the multi-coloured stream and moved in a daze to take his seat at the foot of the long table Hugo Pledge, the Captain of the Dolby company, was Mess President, and for to-night's entertainment he had presented the Mess with five dozen bottles of the finest vintage port from the cellars of his firm The officers of the First Volunteer Battalion of the Loamshire Regiment had no false modesty about their powers of entertainment They intended that their guest night should be voted the best of the week, and it undoubtedly was, for all except somebody like John who for a hors d'œuvre had had his whole future wrecked by a mortal blow He managed somehow to take part in the conversation at his end of the table, and fortunately that end was not the one where Henry Falconer and Dick Medicott were sitting And he must have drunk a good deal, for when Hugo Pledge rose with his glass and called 'Mr Vice, the King!' John felt he was swaying slightly as he responded with raised glass, 'Gentlemen, the King!'

After dinner there were the recognized diversions of cock-fighting between the subalterns and those blindfold duels in which the adversaries were armed with rolled up weekly illustrated papers—formidable enough weapons

This gladiatorial entertainment was followed by a musical performance when some of the captains sang sentimental ballads which had been sung in drawing-rooms for the last twenty years, and some of the subalterns obliged with popular numbers from the latest musical comedies. Then the Colonel sat down to his whist, some of the others to bridge, and the rest to vingt-et-un and banker. The old adage betrayed John. He was as unlucky at cards that evening as he had been in love, and after losing five pounds he retired to a corner of the mess marquee with Tom Pownall, Rickaby, and some of the younger guests to drink whisky and soda. He had made up his mind to avoid meeting Dick Medlicott, but presently Henry Falconer came across with him to the group in which John was sitting.

"May we join you people? This is Medlicott of the 17th Hussars. Pownall of Ours, Rickaby of Ours, Ogilvie of Ours. ah, but of course you've met Ogilvie, Dick."

"No, I don't think so," the cavalry subaltern bit in.

John was still sober enough to appreciate the breach of etiquette that would be involved in calling a guest of Ours a damned liar, but he could not bring himself to greet him, and in rising from his deck-chair he managed to knock over the table of drinks, which necessitated ordering a fresh round and gave him an excuse to preoccupy himself.

"Why don't you drink to Falconer's future happiness?" he muttered to Tom Pownall.

"Shut up, you silly ass," Falconer's red-haired subaltern whispered. "I told you it hadn't been publicly announced yet."

"Well, that's her brother," John persisted.

"I know that "

"Then drink *his* bloody health "

"Shut up, you're tight "

"We're all tight," John declared obstinately "And I don't like his face What the hell does he want to join us for? We were perfectly all right without him "

"Look here, if you're going to get quarrelsome," Pownall whispered, "you'd better go to bed We've got the deuce of a day before us "

"It's all right, Pownall, I'm not going to empty my glass in his face, even although I may not like such a face You can rely on me, Pownall, not to do anything that could be misconstrued as a gesture of offensive insolence towards a guest I'm simply giving you my private opinion of his face in the strictest confidence "

"Well, do shut up, man Falconer's looking at you "

Luckily for John's powers of self-control Dick Medlicott just then said that he would have to get back to barracks

"I'm doing galloper for the chief umpire to-morrow It's going to be quite a show, Henry "

"So we poor foot-sloggers have been led to suppose We've got to be moving by half-past five I think we'd all better be toddling bedwards You're not going to keep it up till dawn, Tom? " he said to his subaltern

The Colonel had risen from his whist, and there was a general move to break up the evening

John would have liked to remain in the mess, but Fleming, the senior subaltern, came along to tell him the Colonel had expressed a desire, which amounted to an order, that all officers should go off to their tents early in view of the day before them, and most unwillingly

he left the marquee His head swirled for a while in the freshness of the night air, but the emotion caused by the news of Rose's engagement was too strong for the fumes of the wine, and by the time he was undressed he was miserably sober Before getting into bed he unlocked the tin helmet case in which he kept the two or three letters and notes he had had from Rose, and without reading them (not that he did not know them by heart) he burnt them one by one and trod the ashes into the sandy gravel outside his tent

A tall figure in a cape coming down the lines in the starlight stopped to see who the figure in pyjamas was

"Hullo, Ogilvie, are you feeling bad?"

"No, no, I'm quite all right, Falconer," said John curtly

"I have something I wanted to tell you Mind if I come in your tent for a moment? You hop into bed It's pretty cool now, though I expect we shall have another blazing day to-morrow "

John looked quickly round the tent to see if there were any unburnt scraps of Rose's letters, but he had done his work thoroughly there was nothing left of them He got into bed Falconer sat down on the camp-chair

"I got back from Switzerland just before we went into camp, and I want to tell you that Rosie Medlicott has promised to marry me I told Tom Pownall to-day, and I meant to tell you, but I didn't get a chance to see you before dinner The engagement will be announced when I get back to Stanstead next week Rosie is coming home on Thursday I know you and she were great pals So you're entitled to hear the news before it's everybody's news "

"I hope you'll I congratulate you "

"Of course I've known her ever since she was a kid "

"Yes, she told me once about going up for May Week at Cambridge with her governess to stay with you "

"I think I fell in love with her then We're to be married in the autumn Well, I just wanted to give you the news myself, and I'll trot along to bed now "

"And will it be in order for me to write and congratulate Rose?"

"I hope you will indeed I'm sure she'll welcome a letter from you particularly It was rather strange that I should propose to her in Switzerland I'd gone out with my old father who was consulting a Swiss specialist about his eyes, and I ran into her and Mrs Beadon in Zürich And then I suddenly realized that Rosie was grown up at last, and as I think I must have wanted to marry her ever since she was ten years old I knew I must hurry up if I didn't want somebody else to carry her off first "

"I expect Mrs Medlicott was very pleased, wasn't she?"

"Delighted So was the Squire I'm a very lucky man "

"Well, thanks very much for telling me, Falconer And again my best congratulations "

"Now did Falconer know anything about myself and Rose?" John asked of his pillow when he had blown out the candle in the lantern and was lying back horribly wide awake in the darkness Was it because he had known more than he pretended that in so friendly a fashion he had given him his news? Or had he noticed the coolness between himself and Dick Medlicott, and

heard something from his future brother-in-law which had made him come to the tent like that and tell him? Or had he with a lover's intuition divined suddenly that he and Rose had been much more than good pals? Well, anyway, he was a good chap, and it was plain that he loved Rose. But surely, surely she could not love him? Or had she loved Falconer all the time and merely fancied herself in love with himself? Falconer had said that when he met her in Zurich he had suddenly realized she was grown up. Was that what he himself had done, wakened her with his kisses only to teach her that she loved somebody else? Or had it been the same kind of weakness which had led her to surrender so easily to her mother's will? Had she known what pleasure it would give Mrs Medlicott to have the future Lady Warburton in the family, and had that age-long inherited instinct to make a good match been too strong for her? Mrs Stern would have good reason to smile when she heard the news. She had never been able to hide her conviction that it was all a mistake. She had been beautifully tactful, but she could never avoid suggesting that the world in which Rose moved was not his world and that for him to enter it was to turn aside into a dead end. Yes, Mrs Stern would be sympathetic enough, but she would find it difficult to conceal her satisfaction. Oh God, how empty life was feeling!

When reveille sounded John had been asleep hardly an hour, but he was nevertheless thankful for the crowded hot tiring day before him.

"I wouldn't wear nothing except a thin vest under your tunic, sir," his servant advised. "It's a bit parky before the sun gets really going, but it's going to be a

scorcher of a day, a fair August scorcher I hear there's likely to be a twelve-mile march before we begin to think about any enemy "

To the strains of *The Loamshire Ploughboy*, the regimental march, the battalion moved out in a scarlet column nine hundred strong

"They say we shall be in touch with the enemy by about eleven o'clock," Captain Meade told his two subalterns

About noon, after marching for hours along dusty Hampshire lanes, the battalion received orders to deploy upon a tract of heathy country and advance in extended order toward a ridge of woodland which was believed to be held by the enemy in force In those days of the South African war advancing in extended order was the latest military passion Close formation was to be considered antediluvian until the Germans showed what could be done with it in the advance through Belgium, after which the training of the British Army ignored extended order in time to make a successful hash of the Suvla landing where familiarity with it would have been serviceable

It was an exhausting business for the subaltern and non-commissioned officers to keep volunteers advancing across rough country with intervals of five yards between each man, conversation demanding a closer interval for comfort It was even more exhausting to persuade men to take cover when the worst danger to be incurred from not taking cover were the purple face and purple language of some critic of high rank from the regular forces enraged by the sight of a private's backside sticking out of a clump of heather

John's half-company was spread out across over two hundred yards, which necessitated his running, with back bent double, up and down the length of it in an effort to prevent his men gradually converging into a more companionable line of fifty yards

"Your half-company is bunching too much, Mr Ogilvie," Captain Meade snapped, with the irritation induced by a message from the Major that unless A Company preserved its extended order more strictly the whole battalion would be held by the umpires to have been annihilated by the enemy's artillery on the wooded ridge which they were advancing to storm

"I'm sorry, sir I'll do my best to keep them extended "

"Then damn it, get a move on, Mr Ogilvie "

John ran along the line until he found Colour-sergeant Capstick

"My god, Colour-sergeant, is it absolutely impossible to persuade these chaps to keep extended? Captain Meade has just been cursing me Look at that man over there! What the hell does he think he's doing?"

Second-Lieutenant and Colour-sergeant dashed as inconspicuously as possible in the direction of a scarlet figure a hundred yards further along who was doing a kind of Dervish's dance at the end of the line

"Private Bawcock," shouted Sergeant Capstick, "get down on your fat belly at once "

But even as he spoke the Colour-sergeant tripped over a tussock and came down on his own belly long before Private Bawcock The accident made him disinclined to listen to any excuses from the offender

"What d'ye think you're doing, Private Bawcock?"

Scaring crows or advancing in extended order against a position strongly held by the henemy's hartillery?"

"I got into a gauze-bush," said Private Bawcock sulkily "And then when I was getting out, a bee "

"Stop that obscene language, man! Can't you see Lieutenant Ogilvie? What are you thinking of?"

"I wasn't using no language, Colour-sergeant It was a bee up and stung me when I was getting out of the gauze-bush "

"That's quite right, Colour-sergeant He *was* stung," a corporal put in

"Well, next time any man is stung, Corporal," said John, "it'll be your business to see that he doesn't stand up and dance about in that idiotic fashion It makes the whole half-company look ridiculous "

The enemy's guns had not spoken throughout this advance, and when at last the attacking force reached the foot of the wooded slope there was a general hope that the order to fix bayonets would be given now and that the position would be carried in a final glorious charge, which would compensate for that weary advance in extended formation No order came, but the men were given a chance to rest for a while under the trees at the bottom, and presently a rumour declared that the position on top was held not by the enemy's guns but by the second battalion of the Loamshires

"Gawd," groaned Private Bawcock "And me crawling half a bleeding mile with a bee-sting in my blooming hand as big as Sergeant Capstick's fat — Sham fight, eh? It won't be no blooming sham fight when I get back to Loam and talk to the old — straight across the counter of his shop Did you hear that, Corp ?"

"Hear what?"

"Why, it's our own gorgeous second battalion at the top of this blooming hill. Sitting there in the shade like heroes and watching us poor — crawling through the gauze and heather like a lot of school kids in an obstacle race. Gawd! No wonder old Kruger had the laugh of us."

The order to advance again was now given. John blew his whistle and waved his arm. There was no sign of the Second Loamshires when they reached the crest. There was merely another stretch of gorse and heather, and another wooded slope about a couple of miles farther on.

Somebody said he could hear gunfire away to the right. "Shut up," jeered Private Bawcock, "that's not guns. That's the Colonel pulling the cork out of his flask. And if I had a pint of bitter in front of me I'd say good luck to him."

John was summoned at this moment by Captain Meade whom he found with Falconer, Pacey-Foote and Pownall puzzling over a map in the shade of a pine-tree.

"You saw no sign of any troops away on your left, did you, Ogilvie?" asked his captain.

"No, sir, not a sign."

"I'm afraid we've got too far to the left," said Falconer. "There's no sign of E and F companies behind us, and we've lost touch with B and C too apparently."

"The last thing I heard was when Major Barker rode up and told me my company was too much bunched," said Meade. "That was when I ordered you to extend the men further, Ogilvie."

John was wishing it had been any other company

commander than Falconer who was involved with them in this muddle. It seemed so fatuous to be arguing here with Falconer about a muddle in a sham fight when Falconer had changed the course of his life by taking Rose away from him. Bewitched by the thought of her, he had allowed himself to be bewitched by the whole scheme of the existence that adorned girls like Rose. In love with her and hoping to marry her he had persuaded himself that England was so well worth defending that even playing at soldiers like this was a solemn duty. He had stifled all criticism of that imbecile assumption of an infallible superiority which was voiced by his brother officers. He had accepted like a law of nature the proposition that the Englishlanded classes represented the highest achievement of human evolution, and the corollary that the lower classes with whom were incorporated not merely all foreigners but even the Irish, the Welsh, and the Scots were created by God to respect and bow down before His chosen people.

"I suppose the best thing we can do is to move forward," Meade suggested.

"I agree with you," Falconer said. "Perhaps we've got too far to the right."

"Or to the left," Meade added.

The two captains bent over to examine the inadequate map once more.

"Some of the men in my half-company thought they could hear gun-fire on the right," said John.

"My fellows thought it was on the left," said Pownall.

"We never heard any firing at all," said Pacey-Foote.

The two captains walked back and swept with their field-glasses the tract of country over which they had

advanced in extended order. It appeared as empty as the Sahara.

"I think that hill ahead must be our objective," Falconer declared.

"But if that's Ashton Ridge, what's the place we're on? There's no sign on this map of any other rising ground beyond Hurst Common, across a part of which we came," Meade objected.

"Perhaps the map is wrong. It's a very cheap-looking affair," said Falconer distastefully.

"I think Major Barker's gone wrong," said Pacey-Foote. "He usually does. I think he's taken the companies in support of us round this ridge we're on. And the reserves with the Colonel must have followed him."

"They were saying in my half-company that the 2nd Loamshires were here," John put in.

"Good god, why didn't you tell us that before?" Meade snapped. "They were in reserve!"

"Lucky it's only a sham fight, Meade," said his brother captain. "Well, what are we going to do?"

"I think we'd better make for the next ridge. We may be able to see better where we are from there."

Orders were given. Whistles were blown. Presently in extended order again the two lost companies were advancing across another desolate tract of furze and heather, the August sun beating down upon them and every man now pursued by a cloud of flies picked up under the trees.

"My missus said I joined the Volunteers by mistake for the Boys' Brigade," observed Private Bawcock, "and darn'ee, the woman was right. And I lay when

we do get there we'll find the beggaring enemy has drunk all the beer"

"Keep low, you men on the left," barked a sergeant

"Low?" groaned one of the culprits "My gawd, if I don't get some pudden inside of me before long I'll be floating across the field like a bleedin' daddy-long-legs!"

"Yes, respect for His chosen people," thought John, swishing at the infernal flies with a bunch of bracken he had pulled during the halt Well, this was the end of such fooling Fitz had been right to jeer at him As soon as this camp was over he would resign his commission Loamshire should know him no more Why, good god, Henry Falconer and Rose would be married in the autumn, and if he came down to Milbourne to put in some drills during the Christmas vac, he would find them established at Warburton Park as a married couple, with years before them of security in the heart of England Falconer would command the battalion in due course A Justice of the Peace A Chairman of Quarter Sessions A Deputy-Lieutenant A patron of half a dozen livings A Master of Foxhounds An indispensable figure in every county enterprise His road lay before him clear and easy And Rose's road was clear enough also Bazaar opener in chief to Loamshire Patroness of all the sales of work within a radius of twenty-five miles Another indispensable figure in every county enterprise for sixty years to come perhaps, unless she broke her neck in the hunting-field

No, damn it, I will not sneer The folly was mine for supposing I could carry her off from this life, or worse that I could fit myself into it and on a few hundred pounds a year grve her the life to which she was born Let the Sleeping

Beauty sleep again If indeed I love her with imagination, if this love is not mere desire for the loveliest girl I have known, I ought to be able to be glad that she has decided to sleep again Henry Falconer is a damned attractive fellow, and a damned good fellow I can't possibly dislike him I can't really pretend that he is not exactly the husband Rose ought to have After all, how insignificant in the order of things is my personal passion for her!

"Enemy cavalry in sight, sir," Colour-sergeant Capstick reported

John put up his glasses and scanned the ridge ahead of him Half a dozen mounted figures were moving along the skyline

"I think it's the umpires, Colour-sergeant "

"Is it, sir?" said the Colour-sergeant in the gloomy tones of disappointment "That's a nasty suck in The men were hoping to fire off a few rounds at last "

"Oh, well, I don't see why they shouldn't," said John "They've had a rotten day " He looked over to the right His own half-company was far enough away to make any message to ask for orders useless if the mounted figures were not to disappear meanwhile He blew his whistle and signalled the men to halt and lie down

"Enemy at nine hundred yards!" he shouted "Ready! Present! Fire!"

The sergeants went running along the line repeating the order, and for two or three minutes the left half-company of A Company of the 1st V B Loamshires enjoyed themselves blazing away at the enemy's cavalry Then one of the mounted figures came galloping down the slope toward the fusillade, and presently an indignant

hussar subaltern was demanding the whereabouts of the officer in charge of this detachment

John stepped forward

"What the hell do you think you're doing, sir?" Dick Medicott shouted

John was so delighted to hear how undignified her brother sounded when he abandoned his carefully cultivated drawl that he could not help grinning

"It's nothing to laugh at Do you realize your men have been firing at the umpires?"

"I was told we should probably find the ridge occupied by the enemy," said John coldly "I supposed them to be the enemy's vedettes "

"Haven't you any glasses?"

"No, that's what we're all looking for," came the sepulchral voice of Private Bawcock a few yards up

"Silence there!" called John sharply

"Don't you know an umpire's armlet yet?" Dick Medicott went on in tones of exasperated contempt

"I'm sorry we've wiped out the umpires," said John "But if they *had* been enemy cavalry and I *had* advanced my men without firing, the umpires might have wiped *us* out "

"Where's the captain of your company?"

"About a quarter of a mile away to the right "

"Well, you'd better go back and report to him that the umpires are extremely annoyed at having been fired at by his men You'll also tell him that the cease fire has sounded and that the pow-wow will be held in Six Tree Bottom about a mile beyond that ridge in front of you "

John saluted, and Dick Medicott rode off to join the massacred umpires

"I'm sorry, sir, it caused a little bit of unpleasantness," said Colour-sergeant Capstick "But it cheered up the men a lot They got rid of over twenty rounds If Captain Meade says anything you can rely on me and the sergeants to swear we were absolutely positive it was the enemy all right "

By this time Meade was approaching to see what all the firing was about He was entirely on John's side over the action taken

"The only mistake was in firing blank," he declared "It's the damned umpires who've messed up the whole day for us Thirty thousand troops engaged, and the two armies have apparently missed one another altogether One begins to understand South Africa now We've had orders to meet for the pow-wow by the edge of Cranlow Wood "

"But that chap Medicott who's one of the gallopers has just told me we're to meet in Six Tree Bottom, and I was to inform you accordingly "

Meade got out his map

"Well, Six Tree Bottom is a mile nearer So we'll go there Get your men together "

The pow-wow was indeed held in Six Tree Bottom, but as the majority of commanding officers in this section of the operations had gone to Cranlow Wood it was not well attended According to the Chief Umpire it had been a highly important and most interesting day, from which many valuable lessons had been learnt Nothing was said about the murderous attack on the umpires by John's half-company

It was then discovered that although the officers' lunch waggon had safely arrived at Six Tree Bottom

the waggons with the men's lunch had presumably gone to Cranlow Wood. However, when the battalion reached Cranlow Wood there was no sign of the men's lunch, but only a very thirsty band waiting to play them home. As there was no lunch for the men the officers of course could not eat theirs, and a dejected battalion formed column to march the twelve dusty miles back to camp.

Tramp-tramp! tramp-tramp! tramp-tramp!

Come lasses and lads,
Take leave of your dads
And away to the maypole hue

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

For every fair

Tramp-tramp!

Has a sweetheart there

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

"If I could get hold of the barstuds as sent our grub to the wrong place I'd make him eat my bloody boots for his supper," Private Bawcock declared. "Gawd, the dust!"

They passed the grey uniforms of the Second Battalion resting by the road, and the band struck up *The Loamshire Ploughboy*.

"Who thought we was the bloody enemy and run for it?" shouted the First Battalion.

The Second Battalion was too tired to shout back a crushing retort.

"Did you barstuds pinch our bloody lunch?" shouted the First Battalion.

The Second Battalion was still mute.

"We'll send back bloody prerambulators to wheel you home," shouted the First Battalion

One man in the Second Battalion had enough breath to sound a raspberry, but the First Battalion had breath enough for fifty

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

The dust was thicker than ever John forgot to think about Rose He could think about nothing except a lemon-squash as big as the Crystal Palace

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

"Can I fall out, sir, please? My feet is getting shocking sore "

"Nobody can fall out unless he's an ambulance case "

Oh, it's my delight on a shiny night
In the season of the year!

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

Thank Heaven, the first tents!

"Battalion! 'Shun! Slope arms!"

The band struck up the regimental march to bring the battalion back to camp in style

For he was a jolly young ploughboy,
A jolly young ploughboy was he

At last the deck-chairs on the lawn outside the mess marquee, and the tinkle of ice!

Just six o'clock

The officers of the First Battalion sat drinking their mint juleps and gin fizzes and lemon squashes and whiskies and soda and horses' necks in the warm gold of the August afternoon while they watched with critical eyes the stragglers of the Second Battalion limping into camp

"And not a man of Ours fell out," observed Pacey-Foote "Well, that proves it's just as important for a Volunteer battalion to have the right kind of officer as it is for the regulars or the militia or the yeomanry "

There was a murmur of agreement which John in his present mood considered too aggressively self-complacent

"Of course," snapped the adjutant, who like all adjutants of Volunteer battalions at this date was a regular, in this case a Cumberland Fusilier "They offered me the adjutancy of the Bayswater Rifles, but I said 'no, thank you' when I found that half the officers were the sons of Westbourne Grove tradesmen It stands to reason you can't make anything out of material like that "

John looked at Captain Shute There was something humorous in a man with a head like a button and eyes with as little intelligence as glass bottle-stoppers talking about reason What was he himself but an animated razor-stop? Their's not to reason why, their's but to do and die What did a man like Captain Shute think about before he turned over at night to seek sleep? Did he like the Pharisee thank God that he was not as other men who were not captains in a famous Fusilier regiment? No, he would hardly possess as much self-consciousness as would enable him to do that Probably about now he was wondering if he would be in good form with the grouse this year, and later on in the month he would be wondering if his form with the partridges would be as good or better than or perhaps not so good as his form with the grouse And then at the end of September he would be able to wonder about his prowess with the pheasants But what would he have to think about half-way through October? Just his own superiority

again, and the superiority of those like him? Oh, but of course he would have the weather to think about from the point of view of hunting until March, after which there would be the winners of various horse-races to think about until the time for grouse came round again. He never read anything. He could turn over the pages of last week's *Graphic* or this week's *Illustrated London News*. 'This fellow Russell they've been trying for bigamy. Bit of a bounder, what?' Says here he was wearing a grey frock-coat and a bright red tie. They ought to have given him three years for that instead of three months. I suppose he's one of these damn Radicals. Damn disgraceful when a fellow like that betrays his own class.' He could turn over the pages of *Punch* and declare that *Punch* was getting deuced dull these days, what? But if you put a book in his hand he would look as much astonished as if you had put a boot in it. Yet he was accounted one of the best adjutants the battalion had ever had. And in justice to him it had to be admitted that there was not a battalion of Volunteers in the whole camp which could excel the First Loamshires in military smartness. Yet it was men like Captain Shute who when promoted to a rank their brains were not capable of sustaining made the kind of muddles which were made in South Africa, made the kind of muddles which had been made to-day at Aldershot. What was the use of training a body of men to be efficient and soldierly if you lacked the brains to ensure that fifteen thousand of them would not miss the fifteen thousand with whom they were supposed to have a battle?

John decided that in joining the Volunteers he had made the mistake of going back on his own convictions

He was not an Imperialist. He hated the theory of the Empire. There was a good case to be made even against the Roman Empire, but the case against the British Empire was overwhelming. The Boers were an unpleasant people in the way that Roundheads had been unpleasant people. Nevertheless, the almost unanimous opinion of the civilized world which was against Great Britain in this business could not be wrong. The only nation which had defended the action of Great Britain was Italy. Was it a memory of Imperial Rome which had made the Italians sympathetic? Or was it a lingering sentiment of gratitude to English support of the *risorgimento*? Or perhaps the memory of their defeat in Abyssinia four or five years ago had given them the kindness of a fellow feeling?

Yes, it had been a mistake to join the Volunteers, a mistake really to fall in with his father's sudden impulse to establish him at a tutor's in Loamshire instead of taking advantage of Elise's good offices and going abroad until he went up to the University. Well, he certainly should not return to Milbourne now. There should be no more of hammering out rhymes in that dusty arbour of jasmine. Rose would be married in October, and in a few months she would have forgotten him.

John drowsed in his chair. It had been a tiring week. Conversation was murmurous round him.

"Well, I don't care what you say, Pledge, I think they ought to forbid motor-cars at meets."

"But look here, Shute, horses will get used to them very quickly. In fact half the trouble is that drivers and riders are so nervous of what their horses will do that they communicate their nerves to the animals."

You reactionaries may as well get used to it soon as late, because nothing you can say or do will stop the motor-car. My own belief is that in another twenty-five years you'll hardly see a horse on the road."

"It'll be a bad day for England when that happens."

"People talked just like that about railway-trains."

"Well, they did have the decency to put railway-trains on lines. They didn't let them loose on the countryside."

"I'll go further, Shute, and say that in my opinion the advance of the internal-combustion engine means that we shall be flying in another twenty-five years."

"Ha-ha, Pledge. To the moon, I suppose? By gad, you mechanical johnnies fnake me smile."

A bugle sounded. John pulled himself out of his deck-chair. It was time to get into mess kit.

"You've been sleepin' very sound, my lad," said the adjutant. "Have a good day."

"We shot up the umpires," John told him.

"Yes, I heard about that. Good job for you. I wasn't about. And I hope you'll have something in the nature of a moustache by next August. We're not the American army, you know. Good gad," he exclaimed, looking up the lines from the lawn, "those fellows in the Second Battalion are still mouching in. It's lucky for them I'm not their adjutant. I'd make them hop around. Scandalous lack of discipline. Well, it's time we were all dressin'."

When John walked out of the mess with two or three of his fellow-subalterns next morning at half-past three he felt when he turned into his tent as if he had just finished a novel by Charles Lever.

There were two letters waiting for him when he reached
Church Row

The first was from Helvetia

BEAR HOTEL,
GRINDELWALD,
July 28th

My dear John,

I'm afraid you'll hate me for ever, but I have promised to marry Henry Falconer I know you'll think I'm feeble, and perhaps I am, but mother was simply savage about our evening last May She got out of me that we had been to Covent Garden before the dance I couldn't help telling her because she was going to write to Aunt Catherine I had to promise not to write to you or try to see you It was the only way, John, really to stop a worse row, because she threatened to tell father about Covent Garden, and Dick too, and Dick can be so objectionable when his pride is hurt And then Aunt Catherine died and none of her money came to us, and mother seemed to think she had guessed something about me and had altered her will out of spite, but as a matter of fact she used to alter her will every other week Cummitt told me she had witnessed at least half a dozen different wills And then I got frightfully depressed by my Aunt Amy who was always talking about my cousin who was killed at Spion Kop and always rubbing it into me about the financial difficulties at home And really they are serious Unless Dick makes a good match I don't see how he'll be able to keep up Medlicott And then we met Henry Falconer in Zurich and he was such a relief after Aunt Amy

The Four Winds of Love

and Mother's letters and everything, and I've always been very fond of him, and when he asked me to marry him I said I would John, I know you won't forgive me, but you must try to understand I didn't see how I could get through years of being grumbled at and criticized for letting the family down And I am terribly fond of Henry So there it is I can't say any more, but if you could forgive me, John, I wish you would And please please don't think that I regret a moment of our time together I shall never forget you

Rose

The thin foreign notepaper gave to this letter an infinite remoteness in time and space It lay in John's hand as light as a skeleton leaf, and the faint crackle as he put it back in its envelope was a ghostly sound She would have written it perhaps sitting on that big wooden balcony overlooking the pastures beyond which towered the Wetterhorn and the Mettenberg and the Eiger, written it perhaps in one of the very chairs in which he had been sitting just over a year ago, ignorant then that she existed Already she was as far from him again as she had been then He would write her a letter to Medlicott Hall wishing her happiness, and that would be the end Rose's letter was completely convincing The decision she had taken was the best for herself It was not the result of despair He was entitled to believe that if other things had been equal Rose would have chosen him in preference to Henry Falconer It was sweet of her to write that she did not regret a moment of their brief time together Perhaps years and years hence she would look back to that box in Covent Garden

and the waltzes and the drives in the hansoms and the primroses by the edge of Harting wood and the pear-blossom in the orchard of Lowes Cottage and the moon that first night hanging over Medlicott Hall years and years hence

John picked up the other letter waiting for him It was from Miriam Stern

21 CLAREMOUNT GARDENS,
HAMPSTEAD,
N W

Aug 7, 01

John dear,

We have been called on some family business to Cracow, and I'm wondering if you would like to come with us We are all going to stay in an hotel, as I do not feel able to cope with the strictness of existence in the ghetto We are leaving on Wednesday the fourteenth I know you are down in camp, but I understand you are expected back by the end of the week So you can let me know then if you can and will come I imagine you won't be staying down at Milbourne for August anyway

I've not heard from you for a long time You will have a lot of news, I expect

My love to you

M S

John's heart leapt with gratitude for this invitation which solved the problem of the immediate future His father and stepmother were with Sir William and Lady Hunter in Worcestershire, where Elise was to remain until the birth of her child His father was evidently

not anxious for him to be on the scene, because he had already suggested his going down to his Uncle Duncan in Hampshire John wired immediately to find out whether his father would agree to the Cracow suggestion, and he was made happy by a telegram of consent and a cheque for his travelling expenses by return of post John was gratified to hear from Mrs Stern that on the whole a passport was advisable One could never be sure in Galicia that there might not be political trouble, and it was as well to be able to claim the respectable protection of the lion and the unicorn

John was duly impressed to find that for a nominal fee *We, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, Marquess of Lansdowne, etc, etc, etc, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, etc, etc, etc, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was prepared to request and require in the Name of His Majesty passage without let or hindrance and every assistance and protection for Mr John Pendarves Ogilvie, and all that on a folio sheet of paper engraved by copper-plate and crepitating as richly as a £100 note*

When Miriam Stern had first suggested the addition of John Ogilvie to their party her elder son was inclined to oppose it He had brought back with him from a visit to Warsaw a few years previously that corrosive sense of humiliation which eats so deeply into the heart of childhood He looked back with fastidious distaste

to the oily corkscrew curls smarmed down over the ears of the fluffy-faced young Jews on their way to the candlelit synagogues when the hush of Friday evening was over the noisy crowded ghetto. He remembered too with the same distaste the monstrous wigs of the married women, and the older men with their fur-trimmed hats and that queer cross between a frock-coat and a cassock into which the gaberdine had developed. He hated these survivals of the past, but what he remembered with the sharpest repulsion was the feeling of exclusion from the normal life of a modern city, and the sudden impingement upon his consciousness of the prejudice and hatred of centuries. That had been an emotional shock to which he did not wish to be exposed for a second time in the company of a Gentile with whom he had been on terms of such intimacy and equality.

"But, Emil," his mother declared, "I am not proposing to submerge you in the Casimierz ghetto at Cracow. We shall stay in an hotel. Such business as I have to discuss will not affect you. You will be enchanted by Cracow, and I was thinking we might go on to Vienna, and perhaps to Budapest and Prague as well. I want Julius to become better acquainted with the fundamental soil of music. And, Julius dear, please don't think I am trying to interfere with your development in saying that. Only, I do feel that you have reached an age when the English scene may exercise a disastrous influence over your music."

"But I've played in all these places already."

"Yes, as a diminutive prodigy, darling, when your surroundings were of comparatively little importance."

"Yes, my dear mother, but how are any decisions

about Julius's musical future to be helped by taking with us such a reminder of home as John Ogilvie?" Emil had demanded "Confess that you want his company as a relief from the ancestral obligations by which you are expecting to find yourself overwhelmed"

"And if I admit that I want John's company for selfish reasons, will you resent that?" she had asked

"You know I never resent intellectual honesty," he had answered

"Well, I'm jolly glad John *is* to be invited," Julius had declared "I may have some observations to make presently on my musical future, and I rather think John will support me"

So the invitation had been sent, and when John went round to Claremount Gardens to say that he could come Miriam Stern's pleasure in the news was perfected by hearing at the same time about Rose Medlicott She tried to commiserate with John, but he waved her sympathy aside

"The news about her and Henry Falconer was a shock for the moment, but I was really prepared for it in a way by the surrender over going to Switzerland, and promising not to write to me I knew then in my heart that we should never be married"

"But I hope you recognize that the whole burden of fidelity was not laid on the shoulders of Rose?"

"You mean you doubt if I should have had the constancy to wait for two and half years?"

"I'm not going to doubt or disbelieve or believe, John But it is not being fair to Rose to be so convinced of her weakness without acknowledging to yourself the possibility of your own You must remember that you were

never tested You retired to your jasmine-arbour and wrote sonnets, an occupation which is no test of anything except rhyme and metre ”

“Not of ideas or emotion?”

“Show me your sonnets ”

“I’ve destroyed them,” said John stiffly

“Why? For their failure to express your ideas and your emotion, eh?”

“For their failure to say anything which had not been better said before ”

“Which means that rhyme and metre dominated all else In the struggle to keep your end up with those two the ideas and the emotion were sacrificed ”

“The ideas and the emotion were stale anyway I realized it was too late in the history of mankind to write love lyrics inspired by the pain of absence from the beloved one ”

“Then do you think nobody will write immortal lyrics of love again?”

“I very much doubt if anybody ever will Most of Tennyson’s *Maud* is pretty terrible, but it’s better than anything written in that mood since—at any rate in English ”

“What about Meredith’s *Love in the Valley*?

Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade

Oh, John, it’s beautiful Wouldn’t you be proud if you could write such a poem to your Rose?”

“Yes, pleased enough, until I began to think about Propertius and Petrarch and Dante and the Elizabethans,

and if it comes to that Heine and Burns Meredith sounds very much the literary gent after them But don't let's talk any more of my sonnets, or any more of Rose I couldn't even write her a letter to wish her happiness which was not stilted her letter to me was far simpler "

"There you are being unfair to yourself, John The letter she wrote to you, bidding you farewell, had to express facts, yours to her had to express feelings and at the same time disguise them But I'll say no more about Rose I'm so glad you're coming with us "

The emotion behind that last sentence welled up and seemed to carry the words away upon a flood in which John had to watch them tossing without power to bring them back to conventional life by a conventional reply

John took care to read all he could about Polish history, and by the time he had been a week in the ancient capital the restoration of Poland to her rightful position in Europe took a place in his heart with other causes counted lost but to faith still attainable The old palace of the kings on the Wawel, used by the Austrians as barracks less perhaps from any desire deliberately to abase yet further Polish nationhood than from that Teutonic insensitiveness which despises defeat, was still eloquent of past greatness, and that mound, that hill indeed, raised by Poles with bags of earth brought from all over the world to make a site for the

statue of the patriot Kosciuszko, heaved up from this teeming plain of central Europe to forbid despair

The hotel in which they were staying was a quiet place overlooking the gardens outside the Florian gate, and during the first fortnight John was often alone, because the others were involved in various visits to distant relatives and friends of the family, against making which Emil and Julius protested loudly but in vain. In one respect only were they successful in having their way, and that was in keeping their Gentile friend out of the business. This gave John an opportunity to visit by himself the museum, the glorious library of the University, and various churches, which he recognized was the only way to see sights. One morning, a morning of hot August sunshine, when the market-place was crowded with vendors under big coloured parasols selling all kinds of fruits and vegetables and gourds, strings of dried funguses, cheese and eggs and poultry, he forsook the gay scene for the glowing twilight of St Mary's church. A late Mass was being said at a side altar by the south door, and he passed through the group of worshippers to sit and meditate in one of the isolated carved pews of the Renaissance in the body of the church which was empty except for a few devotees kneeling before the gleaming jewelled caverns of saintly shrines. The outside of the church, mellowed though its red bricks and steep-pitched copper roof might be by the sun and snow and wind of seven hundred years, did not prepare the visitor for the wonder of colour within. The absence of a great west window as in most of the gothic churches of France and England intensified the solemnity of the twilight stained with rays from the

high windows of honey and emerald and that warm gules which Keats recorded thrown upon the breast of Madeline, that rose-bloom which fell upon her clasped hands. The vaulted roof was blue as night and gilded with a multitude of stars, and above the high altar the sublime triptych of Veit Stoss, the nearest that mortal artist has ever come to portraying the Assumption, was of live gold and azure, carved with such boldness of relief that the angels bearing the body of the Virgin aloft seemed to float away with the Queen of Heaven and hang suspended between earth and sky above the altar. The narrowness of the nave appeared extreme compared with the height, but that accentuated the soaring quality of the interior, the very architectural design being itself an Assumption.

The last time John entered a Catholic church had been in Geneva over a year ago. His mood then had been one of dejection. He had been cold and stiff and hungry after two nights in the open air. He had felt lonely, and he had been intensely aware of his exclusion from the common worship. The dull tawdry little church except for the shelter it had given to his body had seemed less important than the congregation. This church in Cracow reduced the worshippers to such insignificance that he was unconscious of being a stranger. He was absorbed into seven hundred years of prayer, lost like a grain of corn in this vast granary of human aspirations.

This awareness of absorption became a moment of burning acquiescence which were moment used as a measure of time might equally well be called an aeon. During this moment it seemed that in what he could feel was truly a second birth he was humbly accepting the

gift of life now conferred upon him with wider implications. There was not a stone in the church which did not appear to him like a sentient creature, which voiceless indeed but not therefore less eloquent did not welcome him into an immense communion. He was allowed in that moment to perceive the substantial reality of every object in the church, animate or inanimate, to which he responded with a surge of inexpressible love. How long this momentary vision of substantial reality lasted in terms of time by the clock John had no idea, but when he came out of the church the stillness of a hot summer afternoon was over the square. The market women were nodding under their coloured parasols, and business was for a while at a standstill. Suddenly, above the cooing of a myriad pigeons, the trumpeter's horary tune was heard from his room under the eight small spires of the taller of the two towers of St Mary's church. That tune had been blown half-way through the thirteenth century to warn the city that the Tartar hordes were at hand. An arrow had pierced the watchman's throat before his tune was finished, and ever since, without missing an hour of the day or night, trumpeter after trumpeter had blown that same tune from the four windows of that room at the top of the church tower and ever since had ended on the same wavering note, the last note blown by the watchman before the Tartar arrow pierced his throat. Eastward the trumpeters had blown defiance to the Tartar, and southward they had blown defiance to the Turk. To the west they had proclaimed that Poland was the guardian of Europe against Mahomet and to the north they had given warning that she stood firm against Luther.

"I say, aren't you going to have any lunch to-day?" John heard himself asked while he was listening to that trumpet-call of time sounding high above the sun-drowsed market square and the slumberous cooing of a myriad pigeons. He turned to see Julius beside him.

"Is it lunch-time?"

"It's three o'clock."

"Great Scott, it wasn't noon when I went into that church. I thought I was about twenty minutes and I've been in there three hours."

"You must have gone to sleep."

"I suppose I must have, but I wasn't aware of waking. I seemed to be more than usually wide awake all the time. In fact I've had rather a strange experience."

"What was it?"

"It's impossible to put into words. You can't convey a dream to anybody else."

"So you were asleep?"

"No, no. I wasn't actually dreaming. At least I'm almost certain I wasn't. I only used a dream as a comparison. If I tell you that in one instant I fell as deeply in love with the whole of life as I fell in love once with a girl, what will that mean to you? Nothing. It cannot possibly mean anything. The importance of the overwhelming experience is for myself alone. Since I went into that church you have become a richer and a larger personality to me, but the only result of that, so far as you are concerned, is that I have made you wonder where I was while you were at lunch."

"As a matter of fact," Julius said, "I think I can understand, because I had the same kind of experience myself at Fontainebleau last summer. Only, I was sitting under

an oak-tree in the forest when it happened I suddenly loved every human being and every tree and every bird. Indeed I seemed to see people and trees and birds and even houses and furniture for the first time. I didn't say anything about it then because I didn't want to be told it was a sign that the doctor's treatment was doing me good. And now comes the disappointment. I thought that when I started to play again in public I should be able to convey that experience to others with my violin. Yet apparently I couldn't."

"But you had a great success."

"Yes, but the same kind of success I had had when I was quite a kid. Marvellous technique! Astounding virtuosity! But no recognition that I had changed in myself."

"I don't think critics ever like taking risks in the way of giving a definite opinion. They've been frightened by the mistakes of their predecessors."

"Yes, but in this case I believe I'm to blame, not the critics or the public. I haven't discovered how to apply my virtuosity. Emil has a theory that in another year or two I shall merely be a first-class professional violinist, perhaps always able to attract an audience, but incapable of adding anything to the stature of the violinist. And if I wanted further proof of what I've been coming to think for some time now I was given it last night."

The previous evening there had been a gathering in the studio of a well-known Cracow painter at which all the artists had talked politics and all the politicians had discussed art. Poems had been recited, songs had been sung. People had sat crowded together on wide divans, holding hands and dreaming and joining in

choruses A girl with corn-coloured hair had played impromptus and preludes and mazurkas of Chopin winding up with the Etude in C minor which he wrote in 1831 at Stuttgart on hearing the news that the Russians had taken Warsaw The audience in the studio had responded emotionally to the facile indignation and despair of the music, and when later on Julius, declining the partnership of the girl with the corn-coloured hair, had played an austere sonata of Bach he had got into his head that his listeners were bored

"But, Julius, as Emil told you last night, you can't judge your playing by its effect on that kind of audience, or at any rate on that kind of audience on that kind of occasion Besides, only one or two people fidgeted, and you must remember we were all rather squashed up and some of us pretty uncomfortable "

"Whatever you or Emil or my mother may say," the younger boy insisted, "the grim fact remains that I could not command them with my playing I perfectly understand the reason And it is because I do understand the reason that I have decided to give up playing in public for the next two years When I gave up before it was because I was forced to give up by illness, and I was all the time so resentful that my silence was not of the least use to my development as an artist I was not absorbing as I should have been I was continually giving out the wrong kind of emotion Besides, mother is right about the effect of England on music, or at any rate on fiddling Small green meadows and rose-hung cottages are all right for flutes, but they make the violin sound too insistent Sometimes I have felt like a beggar showing his sores to win charity I think I'll remain for

two years in the middle of the plain of Hungary Or perhaps I'll cross the Atlantic and stay in some place like Kansas "

"Why not the Sahara while you're about it?"

"The Sahara isn't fertile I should revert there to a primitive racial type It would be a kind of artistic Zionism The Jew flourishes in the swain Well, for a while I want to get away from the swarm, but I could not bear a sterile solitude, and instead of living with people I want to live for awhile with innumerable ears of corn grown to be devoured by masses of people But what's the good of trying to express myself in words? You could not communicate to me the effect of your three hours in that church The fact that we can both agree we have experienced the incommunicable is a strong tie between us You have your secret I have my secret But neither of us is envious of the other's secret And now come on, let's get back to the hotel Mother was talking about an expedition to the salt mines of Wieliczka. But it's too late to start to-day "

With these words Julius took John's arm, and they wandered away across the sun-drowsed market-square and on under the Florian gate toward the hotel

"Why, John, where have you been?" exclaimed Mrs Stern

"He was exploring churches," Julius put in quickly, "and didn't realize it was so late "

Next morning about ten o'clock the party set out to drive to Wieliczka The road was deep with yellowish dust and thronged all the way by harvest traffic

"All this labour and grind and competition for so little," exclaimed Emil "What a muddle the world is in!"

"Much less of a muddle here than in the towns," his mother suggested

"That's just a sentimental point of view," he scoffed "It's no pleasanter to slave to sow and cut and carry corn than to slave in a factory Workers on the land have a better chance to grab something from their neighbours That's the only reason why they seem more content with their lot I was walking round Casimierz this morning and thinking how wretched the inhabitants would be if the ghetto were emptied to-morrow and those bewigged Jewish women and those cheesy green-faced youths with fluffy beginnings of beards and those dignified old Shylocks were all emptied out of it and made to till these fields, to cut grass for hay, to tend geese, and carry out all the rest of this dreary agricultural grind "

"If agricultural labourers and factory labourers are equally slaves," John asked, "who's going to do the work under your scheme for the improvement of everything?"

"Machinery "

"I don't think machinery has brought so much happiness to humanity "

"No, because men are still to a great extent the slaves of the machines they have invented But they will end by controlling them," Emil argued

"Or they may not," John retorted "It's at least just as probable that machines will enslave men more completely than they have already Besides, in the struggle with machines men will forget what to do with wealth and leisure, and so when they have tamed their own inventions they'll expire of boredom I don't believe you'd help any of these peasants by giving them labour-saving devices I've always had a great sympathy with

the Luddites, and I'm inclined to think that the names of Watt and Stephenson should be execrated instead of being extolled "

Emil shook his head

"My poor John, this is just shoddy Ruskinism that you're talking Do try to realize that the twentieth century has begun "

"Well, if I'm talking shoddy Ruskinism you're the victim of numerical superstition You talk as if the beginning of a new century was a certain talisman to progress We think of history in terms of centuries for convenience, but if you made the middle of a century the starting-point you could get just as convenient a set of epochs "

"I suppose you'll allow that there is such an abstraction as progress?" Emil asked sarcastically

"I'll allow motion, but I'm not convinced of progress Suppose that the universe is based on a central point which some will call God and suppose that man moves round and round this central point in a series of widening circles The result will be that, although by moving in wider circles we have an illusion of doing more and seeing more and so of leading what we fancy is a fuller and richer life, we shall all the while be moving further away from that central point Centrifugal movement has no more right to the name of progress than centripetal movement "

"You're ascribing a false value to your central point by suggesting its divinity," Emil pointed out

"You are ascribing an equally false value to your onward movement Because the usual result of a human being's walking backward is that he bumps into something we conceive by a false analogy that everything must move forward if it is to move rationally and usefully

We fancy that the material conditions of our forbears were intolerable because we have outlived "

"Exactly, outlived them," Emil put in, "that's the point "

"No, it's not the point at all I won't say 'outlived', I'll say 'passed beyond' We are used, let us say, to railway trains and therefore we pity our great grandfathers who had to travel in coaches But they didn't pity themselves for their methods of conveyance Perhaps in this marvellous century of which you hope so much man will learn to fly Are you at this moment a wretched object of compassion because you can't fly to these salt mines in a couple of minutes instead of driving there in a carriage behind a pair of horses?"

"That's a most superficial illustration I'm not asking you to accept rapidity of movement as the *summum bonum* There is such a thing as intellectual progress "

"All right We'll agree But intellectual progress destroys as much as it builds Which would you sooner be without, the *Iliad* or the *Origin of Species*?"

"That's another completely superficial argument," insisted Emil "The *Iliad* leads ultimately to the *Origin of Species* For all we know palæolithic man may have had an *Iliad* much more wonderful than ours And in our ignorance we do not miss it Oh, it's really ridiculous to suspect progress Unless we can believe in a progressive amelioration of life we may as well call it a stupendous lunatic asylum "

"But, Emil, what philosophical grounds have you for optimism? You refuse to believe in a Creator willing good to His creation How then can you feel this extraordinary confidence in the infallible instinct of mass

humanity to choose the true, the good and the beautiful? What evidence can you offer on behalf of humanity? I suppose you'll tell me that medical knowledge is now greater than it was and that civilized nations have abandoned the habit of torture as a legal instrument. I'll agree with you every time that lots of things are better nowadays than they were, but you'll have to agree with me that lots of things are worse. You are really sustained by what I maintain is an illogical belief that somehow or other *everything* is for the best. We benefit one part of humanity with machinery at the expense of the other part. Your optimism insists that the whole of mankind must ultimately benefit. Why? I should have thought that the history of your own race would alone have made you distrust this humanitarianism which as it seems to me is based on a most inadequate appreciation of human folly and wickedness when pride leads man to fancy himself capable of separation from God, or if that is asking you to assume the existence of a God whose existence you cannot persuade yourself to accept, I will say when pride leads man to suppose himself to be the equivalent of God."

"Very well then," Emil allowed, "we'll accept for the moment your God. Are you going to claim that this omniscient and omnipotent Being is standing by, just watching the creatures of Himself blunder recklessly along what they imagine to be progress but which His omniscience knows to be nothing of the sort and which His omnipotence refuses to correct?"

"Well, of course, that brings up the question whether this life is the only life."

"Yes, exactly. In order to correct the grotesque

picture of this universe involved by a belief in a personal creator you have to invent another life for which you allow your imagination full freedom to make it perfect. You talk about pride, my dear John, but the unbeliever's pride is modesty itself compared with the pride of the believer who thinks he can create by the supine mental process he calls faith a better world than his God has made of the one in which he finds himself. He then proceeds to exalt this mental process to the same level as the toleration and comprehension brought about by inexorable progress which we all call love, and what is more he refuses to allow those without faith to possess this love, because unless he is able to make a corner of all the virtues he is afraid that this faith of his will be exposed as the mental trick it is."

"Well, that brings the argument to a standstill," said John. "First because I'm not at all sure that I have any of this despised faith, and secondly because if I had it would probably be a state of mind that was incommunicable."

"And that being so," Mrs. Stern put in, "won't you two extremely loquacious philosophers lean back and sniff the delicious perfume from that cartload of pumpkins which is passing us at this moment?"

Julius shouted with laughter.

"Now there is an act of faith if you like! Our beloved mother sees the golden pumpkins and thinks they smell as delicious as they look, but what she's really smelling is this basket of pears which I bought to refresh ourselves upon the weary journey to the salt mines of Wieliczka. All the same, Emil, I'm not going to support you in pitying these harvesters. While you've been jabbering

I've been imagining that I should like nothing better than to dress myself like a gipsy and play my way across this fat flat countryside of ripening corn and fruit "

"Romantic rot!" scoffed Emil

"Neither romantic nor rot," his brother retorted "To dress myself as a gipsy would be essentially practical and to play to an audience who paid *after* hearing me instead of beforehand would be a very very wise experiment At any rate, whatever you may say, Emil, I am going to settle down somewhere in Bohemia or Galicia or Hungary or perhaps even in Roumania and not see London or Paris or New York for at least two years "

"Dear Julius, this is a most revolutionary step," said his mother "And must I make up my mind to such an exile?"

"If you insist on living with me," her younger son replied, "but I'd really much rather live alone "

"At fifteen?" she queried "I hate to be a spoil-sport, but I really don't think that's quite feasible "

"Oh, I knew you wouldn't agree to my having a house of my own, though of course there is no reason why I shouldn't If I'm fit to play a concerto before an audience I'm fit to have my own house Still, I'm not unreasonable I'll agree to live with some nice family provided I'm given a guarantee against excessive interference All the same I should feel safer in a house of my own "

"I think Julius is absolutely right," John put in with enthusiasm "He can escape from this protracted adolescence to which we are doomed by our gentlemanly education "

"As usual you are wrong," Emil contradicted "This protracted adolescence as you call it is the secret of the

strength of England. If you had even the most superficial knowledge of biology you would hardly have failed to note that the higher the animal the longer the period of his helplessness in youth. The new-born calf is more mature than the new-born kitten. The new-born kitten is more mature than the new-born ape, and the most helpless of them all is the new-born baby. On that analogy the protracted education of the Englishman leads to a richer and more efficient maturity than the precocious development of the Latin races, just as their moderately protracted education produces a richer and more efficient maturity than that of savages who make mere puberty the test of age."

"Hear, hear! Loud and prolonged cheers!" Julius shouted, waving his straw hat, and jumping up and down on the seat of the carriage to the astonishment of the wayfaring peasants who turned to stare at him from bovine eyes.

"The analogy might be all right if it could be sustained," said John. "But in the first place I don't accept what you call the richer and more efficient maturity of the Englishman, though I will admit that he often scores over the foreigner by the disconcerting way in which he applies to maturity the standards of judgment acquired during this protracted youth of his. You get it in that probably fictitious story of Drake and the bowls. If Drake really stopped to finish his game of bowls before he attacked the Spanish fleet he was behaving like a schoolboy, and we are taught by our fatuous history books to admire such behaviour. Apparently you honestly do admire such behaviour, though I fancy you'd find it pretty tiresome if you ever came up against it outside

the pages of a tendencious history book Kipling has known better than any Englishman how to exploit English qualities which I do not believe exist in fact Yet when his idealized strong silent soldiers made asses of themselves in South Africa the public read the *Daily Mail* and failed to see anything admirable in sporting behaviour which led to completely underestimating the enemy they were dealing with and so to some pretty ignominious surrenders and a great deal of inexcusable loss of life Even Shakespeare could not help glorifying this sporting attitude His Henry V is typical of what an Englishman wants to fancy the English man of action is like Tell the average man that Henry V was in fact an ambitious brilliant theological bigot, and you would be stared at The average man imagines he was something like C B Fry in armour ”

“All of what you have said entirely bears out my contention,” said Emil “The Frenchman cannot stand up to the well-trained cold vitality of the Englishman ”

“No really, Emil, I can’t allow you to pretend this enthusiasm for a public-school education How many times have I heard you rail at its effect on your little schoolfellows !”

“Of course he does,” Julius put in “It’s only because he’s jealous of his distinguished younger brother’s precocious appearance upon the scene of life that he’s talking like this ”

“Do you really suppose, my good ass, that because you’ve been allowed to appear on a concert platform dressed like a photographer’s dream you have therefore appeared upon the scene of life?” the elder brother demanded scornfully

"More than you have anyway Don't listen to him, John When I have my house in the middle of acres and acres of flat cornland you shall come and stay with me and we'll discuss all sorts of things that Emil would never understand, not even if he was still going to school when he was forty "

"It's impossible to argue with you two," Emil declared loftily "You're like a couple of kids playing with sand-castles "

"Protracted adolescence! Protracted adolescence!" Julius shouted again "There you are, you fool "

"Please, Julius dear," his mother interposed, "please don't let us descend from discussion into hurling stupid epithets "

"Well, when John and I agree that it's nothing but dull convention which compels everybody to grow up at the same moment, we're told by Doctor Emil, A S S, that a protracted adolescence is good for us and will make us men of mark in the future, but the reason that Professor Emil, A S S, brings forward against the advantage of our growing up is that our growing up is a kid's game I may be only a poor little uneducated freak of a fiddler, but at any rate I have a bit more logic than that "

"But, Julius dear, are you absolutely serious about wanting to retire like this into the heart of Europe?" his mother asked curiously

"Quite serious How am I going to learn to express the emotional state of this time of ours in terms of Western man except by living in the heart of Europe? England has many advantages, but it has one great disadvantage for an interpreter of emotion, which is that it is on the

fringe of Europe It is excluded from the common hopes and fears You know that as well as I do, mother In fact you practically said as much to me yourself "

"But why do you want to be away from me—away from us?"

"Because you and Emil are as completely surrounded by salt water as England is "

"I wish you wouldn't keep on saying England when you mean England, Scotland and Wales," John protested

"Oh well, England stands for all three nowadays, and Great Britain sounds more like a bird than a country," Julius said, and with no more attention to the interruption than if it had been a piece of pedantry on the part of John he went quickly on "Mother, I really am serious I won't insist on being absolutely alone But I want it to be *my* house I said just now I would live with some family But I've already realized that even to give way so far would spoil the great experiment And so I'm afraid I'll have to say I can't live *en pension* with some family who'll think that by calling me Herr Stern or Monsieur Stern or Pan Stern or Whatever they call you in Hungary Stern they can treat me like an infant in every other way Find some elderly slightly decayed woman of the world with a profound dislike of music, mother, who will keep house for me and whom you can make financially responsible if you like, but I will not be boarded out And she is not to be a Jewess I don't want to have to contend with ingrowing mental toe-nails "

"Perhaps it could be managed," Mrs Stern said pensively She was thinking that her younger son had unquestionably a right to choose his immediate future

since it was he who had paid for so much of the comfort and freedom his mother and elder brother had enjoyed during these last six or seven years. Might not his instinct be leading him toward a wise decision? Emil had prophesied that his precocious genius would burn itself out. Were she to thwart Julius now and that were to happen, might he not have just cause to reproach her for the rest of his life? Might not the fading out of so many musical prodigies be due to the abuse of their genius by domestic ties? If she gave way to this whim of Julius what harm would be done except to conventional ideas? Moreover, it probably was not a mere whim. Julius had no doubt been pondering over this move for a long time. It had always been his habit to appear to improvise. In any case she had already granted both Emil and him a freedom to develop outside the strict traditions of their race. She had recognized from the day they were born their independence of the age-long honoured Jewish worship of parents. That had been the cause of poor Ernest's jealousy. He had always considered her treatment of them to be an infringement of his own rights as husband and father. The death of Ernest had given her liberty to achieve what she had always flattered herself was a superior attitude toward her children. Logic demanded that she should not begin to interfere with their development now in the interests of what after all was no more than a prejudice which was incapable of allowing for exceptions. Emil had wished to go to St James's School. Emil wished now to go on from there to Oxford. If Emil received a conventional education it was his own choice. Why must Julius be denied his own choice? Yes, and he was

probably right. Some profound instinct was guiding him. He expected to renew himself in this heart of Europe. He had been right to challenge her with the fact that it was she who had first put into words a mistrust of England for a musician. What had given him this *heimweh* indeed, by the way he spoke of those corn-fields it really could be called this *heimweh* for the heart of Europe? She was not so unimaginative but that she could divine his longing to grow for awhile with the corn, to seek those wide horizons undiscoverable in the green miniatures of England except beside the sea, 'the unplumbed salt estranging sea' which when one began to ponder upon it appeared as the enemy of all music that was not its own.

Miriam Stern looked at her two sons who with their backs to the horses were still arguing with John on the seat beside herself. It was surprising how Emil still kept at seventeen the fragile charm of his looks. It seemed as if he would pass from boyhood into manhood without being condemned to linger in that awkward indeterminate age between the two. Julius on the other hand was already the victim of manhood's grotesque invasion of youth. A moustache much too full for his years merely drew attention to a mouth less finely cut than Emil's without concealing it at all. His voice had broken to a resonant bass preposterously out of keeping with his small body. Straight heavy eyebrows, the division between which was darkened by hairs like mountains on an ill-drawn map while the thickness of them was accentuated by the jutting musical brow, gave those smoke-dark eyes, clear as a child's, a sullen shadow. It might be the consciousness of his own

clumsy youth which had inspired this impulse to retire. The call of Central Europe might not be due so much to his ancestral origins as to a desire to expand and grow without being reminded by his surroundings of the ugly side of the process.

The carriage was passing a striped blue-and-white house with a high steep roof shaded by two large cherry-trees. In such a house she saw Julius installed, not beside a high road, but away from dusty thoroughfares in the middle of a golden plain of wheat beneath a pavilion of sky which descended to the level horizon on every side. The house was easy enough to conjure up. What was less easy to conjure up was that elderly decayed housekeeper. She was not to be Jewish? That was no doubt partly an expression of Julius's prejudice, which must have been roused by the sight of those bewigged Jewesses in Casimierz. A Frenchwoman would be the most suitable *dame de compagnie*, but how to find the right Frenchwoman who would be willing to tolerate even for two years that banishment from her country which the French dreaded above any other nation? The task might be impossible. It would almost inevitably have to be a woman of whatever country was decided upon for this retreat. Next week they would leave Cracow and explore within the boundaries of the Austrian Empire. Nothing should persuade her to consent to his living over the Russian border, and Roumania was a fantastic suggestion.

If now it had been John who had announced his determination to retreat like this, how easy it would be to give him the perfect housekeeper in herself! Not that John would choose the plains of Central Europe

For him and her it should be Spain or Italy The carnations and fountains of the Alcazar at Seville the orange groves of Sorrento the Roman pines the Roman Campagna two in the Campagna tombs and aromatic weeds and the arches of the broken aqueduct silence and passion, joy and peace, an everlasting wash of air Rome's ghost

The carriage stopped beside a restaurant on the outskirts of Wieliczka where as usual they had *barszcz* and declared as they always did how much better the Polish way of making beetroot soup was than the Russian, and after the *barszcz* they had carp which was as nasty as carp can be and tasted as carp always does of nothing except mud It was about one o'clock when they reached the offices of the salt mine, an ugly pile of modern buildings with geometrical flower-beds in front scantily planted with drooping dusty asters and coxcombs and the bedraggled plumes of love-lies-bleeding

Before they descended into the mine by one of the cages they were given green velveteen caps and loose drab coats to protect them against the salt, which to their disappointment was not the glittering white they had expected but a dirty slimy grey The part of the mine which was shown to visitors resembled an abandoned exhibition The chapels with their chandeliers and statues of salt were hardly credible as serious places of worship in spite of the guide's assurance that Mass was sometimes said in them and that they were then thronged with devout miners

"Well, anyway we know now what Lot's wife looked like," Julius observed, contemplating one of the carved figures in the great dancing-hall

In another of these caverns was a museum of the various things found during the operations of nearly a thousand years, and here too were examples of the antique tools for cutting the salt, and the clumsy utensils for carrying it to the surface up hundreds of feet of wooden ladders. The guide insisted a great deal on the superiority of modern conditions and pointed with pride to the bulbs of electric light everywhere

Emil was anxious to see the miners at work to-day

"This is like an empty aquarium," he declared

They had reached one of the subterranean ponds, a sheet of immotionable green water some fifty yards long into whose vitreous depths they stood staring across a wooden railing. The guide produced the stock stories of drowned men and women which were to be expected from such an appropriate setting, and Julius disconcerted him by saying that he had always heard you could not drown when water contained more than a certain proportion of salt

The guide shrugged his shoulders, and suggested that perhaps the victims had died of the cold. That several had been found dead in this expanse of water was undeniable

"It looks like an enormous piece of angelica, doesn't it?" Julius exclaimed

Emil returned to the miners of to-day, and the guide said that if the young *herren* would not mind a longish walk along a tunnel which would involve a good deal of stooping here and there and a good deal of ladder-

climbing he could give them a glimpse of the miners actually at work. There were over a thousand of them employed at present.

"But I am afraid that the *gnadige frau* will find the exertion too tiring," the guide added.

"Then I'll walk slowly back to the cage," said Mrs. Stern. "I'm sure I can find my way."

The guide held up his hands in horror. Such a suggestion struck at the roots of his profession. He declared that an attempt to find her way back alone might easily end in her never reaching the surface alive. There were countless tunnels and galleries in which she might be lost for ever to sight and sound. He could not undertake to conduct the young *herren* to the active part of the mine unless the *gnadige frau* promised in the most solemn way not to move from the side of this lake. There was a bench on which she could repose herself, and the slight soreness of the throat set up by breathing the salty air for another half-hour would pass off within a few moments of being in the fresh air again.

"I'll stay with you," John volunteered. "I don't in the least want to see the miners of to-day at work. And this queer green lake rather fascinates me."

So it was arranged. The guide, with Emil and Julius, vanished round a bend in the tunnel. Miriam Stern remained behind with John. For two or three minutes neither of them broke the silence which followed the departure of the others.

"Are you enjoying yourself in Cracow, John?" she asked abruptly at last. She was feeling that if she did not say something soon not a word would be said by either while they stayed here alone, for the effect of staring down

at this salty glaucous sheet of water was to freeze the body and mind into an immobility that was cataleptic Hence what was superficially a polite enquiry, although as she made it Miriam Stern was aware of longing for an answer which would spring from depths more profound than the bottom of this berylline expanse of water

"Well, you know I am," he replied

She must press him To sit here in this silence below the teeming life of the sunny earth above and find him no more responsive than the motionless pool at her feet was unendurable They would turn to pillars of salt themselves

"As much as you enjoyed Fontainebleau last year?" she asked

"I always enjoy being with you whether it's Hampstead or Fontainebleau or Cracow"

"In a way I wish it were winter, John Cracow is exquisite in winter under the snow Sleighbells and tinkling ice A warm room and a white world Not this unplumbed salt estranging sea"

"Why are you quoting Matthew Arnold?"

"I was quoting it to myself as we drove along, thinking of the problem of Julius's future, thinking that the sea was jealous of all music except its own And now I'm quoting it because this underground lake in front of us is just as unplumbed and salt and estranging as the sea itself"

"To music?"

"Yes, to the music of two people or the music two people could make"

Oh, Miriam, what possesses you to talk like this? If he responds to this warmth because all else is so chill what will it

profit you? Fool, fool that you are, talk about Julius again
Talk about Emil Talk about anything that will keep you
sane

"The music two people could make," he was echoing
in a voice as still and cold as the voice of one of those
statues of carven salt, should it speak

*If that glassy pool were a mirror, you would not thus tempt
yourself to folly You are not buried here for ever Within
an hour you will be standing in the sun again, standing in it
like one of those drooping dusty asters in front of the offices
of the mine*

"I wonder what you meant by that?" he was whispering
to himself

*And well may you wonder, John But I do not wonder
I know that fate by bringing me down into this stuffily warm
but yet icy cold salt mine has shown me what the rest of my life
will be like if I reject this moment The very salt I eat will be
bitter with the thought of what I lost Here underground
will be all the savour of salt for ever and ever not to be
tasted again until the sharpness of death You wonder what I
meant by that? I meant that I desire you to take me, John,
if only with the haphazard curiosity of youth John, how can
you sit as motionless as this infernal green sheet of water
when I burn beside you? When I burn in the fridity
of stuffy warmth which encompasses us, this unnatural
fridity, John? For though twenty years stretch between
us they have been shrivelled down here below the sunny
earth to nothingness Here we are both equally alive because
round us is nothing except lifelessness*

"Can you not see what I meant, John?" she asked,
and taking his face between her hands she kissed him
on the lips

He held for a while her ivory hand

"The warmth of summer when she outsteps June to lull the blossom of a windblown May," he murmured at last, half to himself

"I don't recall that quotation, John "

"Well, no, as a matter of fact it just came into my head at that moment "

"I shall have to fall back on another poet for my answer, John Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee calls back the lovely April of her prime "

He was silent Her kiss was seeming to him the first commentary of life upon that sudden expansion of the mind and abrupt deepening of the emotions which had occurred yesterday during those mysteriously swift three hours of meditation in the church of St Mary He had suspected that the mental experience signified a passage from one plane of development to another almost like moving up to a higher class in school, and his inward response to that kiss was the proof of it If he looked back to himself as he was so short a time back as yesterday morning he could not imagine how that creature he was then would have behaved in these circumstances Dived into the salt green pool to escape from the embarrassment of this occasion? Yes, he would have been capable even of that But yesterday he had fallen in love with life, and already with that kiss life had accepted him He was no longer a youth preoccupied with the petty egotisms of his status He was ready now to respond to experience without regard to any wounds it might inflict upon his own self-esteem When he had fallen in love with Rose he had had to tell two other women about his passion in order that from them he might receive

the approbation and encouragement he wanted to assure himself of the authenticity of that passion. How ridiculous! Imagine confiding in Elise that he had kissed the woman whom she had instantly recognized to be in love with him! And was he in love with her? Not if he was to judge by the way love for Rose had struck him.

"You are wondering whether you are glad or sorry that I kissed you," she challenged.

"I kissed *you*," he replied quickly.

"You would not have done so, John, of your own accord."

"I should have lacked the confidence in myself. I should have been afraid you would be angry with me, or worse that you would laugh at me."

"But you don't kiss me again."

John was already wise enough to know that if he clumsily answered this by taking her in his arms her pride would be wounded.

"No, because I don't like the idea of calculating that we have only so many minutes before Emil and Julius come back, and stopping when we think we ought to stop if we want to appear composed and indifferent when they do come back."

"You did not yield so easily to prudence that April day at the cottage when ah, John, when I have dreamed myself young again in your arms don't let me wake with all the signs of age upon me. There, I promise you that shall be the last time you find me making comparisons from the past. And never think for an instant, John, I am idiotic enough to believe that any woman, least of all myself, can ever carry you again so high above this world as your first love. If I envy

you that first love, my dear, it is only because I never had a first love in the April of my prime But, fling prudence on one side, my dearest, and hold me in your arms another instant or two, even if when I make such a request I do feel like a Pluto who has dragged his Proserpine from the golden air of earth to subterranean shades "

"It is strange," he said, "when you kiss me I feel that I am drinking wisdom like wine With Rose every kiss was a fresh despair Your kisses are a pledge of contentment "

"Ah, John, for you perhaps, but not for me, my dear On you the south wind of love begins to blow for me it is still in the east, an east wind at summer's end which will wither all the late roses, not an east wind of May which shrivels the blossom but leaves the fruit to set "

Miriam Stern sat upright on the bench beside the salt pond, and seemed to shake herself

"There, that's the end of my lamentations, John," she declared "I care for nothing but that you should love me in the way my love may serve you for as long as it does serve you, and that when the inevitable moment comes when you feel our intimacy as a tie you should have the courage to tell me so, I promise you that I will have the resolution to accept the fact with so light a tax upon your kindness, my dear, that when our love which began with friendship turns back to friendship, that friendship will be not merely untarnished but exquisitely enriched by the passionate emotion which has been added to it "

For another twenty minutes they sat talking about the

best way of carrying out for Julius the plan on which he had set his heart

"The woman is the difficulty, John "

"I don't think so I think you should get a good practical housekeeper, and visit him yourself fairly often He has a notion to read a great deal "

"But who is to direct this reading ?"

"He has enough intelligence to direct himself After all, he is not aiming to be a scholar Let his reading be uncritical What harm will it do ? Of course, I'll admit that I am tremendously anxious to see how the experiment works I have believed for so long that we kill artists nowadays by too much interference with them at the really impressionable age that I want to see Julius prove my theory Very few young people are as lucky as myself I escaped from the hideous bondage of school when I was seventeen and shall be able to claim that before I was nineteen I had learned more about love than most people at the mercy of a public-school education learn all their lives The only pity is that I didn't escape when I was fifteen, though perhaps at fifteen I was not as ripe for independence as Julius is "

"Yes, and perhaps the long struggle against discipline is the best discipline of all "

"If it does not have to be carried out too long Fancy me at school until a week or two ago A ghastly thought ! And I don't think it's good even for people who have no artistic aspirations That last year gives them a completely false idea of their importance, from which many of them never recover We all know the man who declares that his school days were the happiest of his life We are apt to consider such a fellow a humbug, but I don't a bit

believe he's a humbug I believe he's speaking the truth He's thinking about his brief hour of importance when small boys looked upon him as a king and to all his contemporaries he was hail fellow, well met I can easily understand such a man for the rest of his life, perhaps that of a Civil Servant always subject to the criticism of the man above him, sighing for his school-days, which in retrospect must appear like his twenty-four hours of sovereignty as Caliph to the Bagdad porter "

"Still, it is rather an alarming experiment," the mother demurred "It's like one of those chemical experiments one did in childhood and thought all the while there would be an explosion No doubt we have suffered too much during the nineteenth century from an exaggerated worship of superficial respectability which has inculcated in us a dread of allowing the least freedom to the young, but to allow a boy of fifteen to be his own master to the extent we are proposing to let Julius be his own master does seem a somewhat excessive reaction "

"All I can say is that no discipline except self-discipline has had any beneficial effect on me since I made up my mind that school was a protracted bore I'm not going to suggest that children should escape discipline from the start, but Julius has had the discipline that must accompany a stiff apprenticeship to art Moreover, on top of that he has had to cultivate self-discipline under the criticism of an audience What will you do with him if he is not allowed his house in the cornfields? You wouldn't send him to school? That's unimaginable "

"I hope I'm not behaving with ridiculous weakness over Julius merely because I feel that I am myself open to criticism Man is ever a propitiating animal "

"I am convinced that by doing what Julius wants you will help him as an artist," affirmed John, who at the moment felt at least thirty years older than Julius

"Emil seemed a little doubtful," she reminded him

"I think if one had a younger brother one would always feel a little doubtful about him Besides, Emil is so sure of his own education for the next five or six years to come, which happens to be a perfectly conventional education, that he's bound to regard Julius's plans for himself as self-indulgence "

"But what will Julius do for company?"

"I suppose he will make friends with the country people That will be easy at his age And I think one of the curses of modern existence in Europe is the deliberate separation of class from class which as far as I can make out is more rigorous in England than anywhere As a matter of fact it would do Emil a lot of good to live with the people for a while All this doctrinaire humanitarianism of his will land him in a muddle one day unless he does He'll be coming back presently, full of the wrongs of Galician miners, but put him down among them and he would have as much chance of establishing a real intimacy with them as with the giraffes at the Zoo "

Soon after this Emil and Julius returned with the guide, and as John had prophesied Emil was scornfully eloquent upon the conditions of labour in the salt mines For this eloquence both John and Miriam Stern were grateful, because in spite of their having so carefully prepared for the return of Emil both feared lest his quick eye should detect the change in their relationship which had occurred during that wait beside the pond He was

apparently too much preoccupied, however, with the wrongs of labour But presently Miriam Stern forgot about Emil in her own dread that when they all emerged into the August sunlight after their sojourn in the depths John would see her with changed eyes, and yielding to the cruelty of the hot bright air turn from her in contempt She felt inclined to look back like a second Eurydice and vanish into the darkness below It was not until he touched her hand when they sat back in the carriage to be driven home that she was reassured And then in a contented languor she let the dusty miles go by, aware that the three boys were arguing with as much vigour and volubility as during the drive out from Cracow that morning, but living intensely all the while within her own dream

Fourteen hours later when the sky was paling at dawn's approach Miriam Stern put out her hand to detain John for another minute or two before he left her room

"I have made a resolve which you must help me to keep, my dear These hours have been so much more perfect than anything I had ever dreamed of that I cannot bear to contemplate spoiling the perfection of them by less perfect hours in the future I have said to myself, John, that I would know the moment to break off this intimacy in time to preserve its memory unstaled by emotion, but I realize now that the only way to do that is to break it at this moment This night links us for the rest of our lives The friendship, the intimate intimate friend-

ship now possible, will be marred by no regrets On one side you have given to me more than I have been able to give you, but if you have a woman for a friend who will be absorbed in your lightest and wildest actions alike, and who will stand aside without the least jealousy from whatever passion or love enthralls you in the years to come, you will possess something that few men possess If in yielding to my own desire I have wronged you, forgive me, John I have already whispered to you in the darkness my excuses "

He sat on the edge of the bed, dazed by this unexpected epilogue

"Vanity, beloved boy, makes me want you to be hurt by my ruling that this first time is to be the last time also, but vanity is a miserable emotion beside love, and I would not hurt you, John You are not hurt, are you?"

"No, I don't think so Sitting here now I think you're right But I can't quite answer for what I'll think to-morrow "

At this moment the tune of the trumpeter playing the hour sounded thinly across the silent city John went across to the open window and leaned out to listen Eastward it had sounded Southward it was sounding now Westward it would sound, and northward And always with that broken wavering note at the end He listened, the cool breath of dawn upon his face For nearly seven hundred years by night and by day, hour after hour, that tune had defied time Its strength was in the feeble wavering note at the end Its triumph was its failure

John turned away from the window and in the glimmer-

ing light which now filled the ugly hotel room he sat down again upon the bed and took Miriam's hand

"I know you're right To-night has consecrated a friendship "

He threw himself across her breast, and she held him close for a few moments

"Kiss me and go," she said "It is growing light There will soon be people moving in the hotel And that we have to think of such people is only one more reason why this night must remain unique "

Her last kiss was still upon his lips when he reached the door and turned to look back at her once again where in the glimmering twilight of dawn she seemed to fold her wings like a white moth with glowing eyes and fade into the pillows

John's own room when he came back to it gave him a chilly welcome It was like a friend who has been excluded from a secret The bed cold and white had an aggressive chastity It grew light rapidly, and sleep was far away

Yet to Miriam Stern when John had left her sleep came more softly and more graciously than for many years, and when she woke she found her resolve had set hard She knew that John could hardly avoid embarrassment at their first meeting, and therefore instead of waiting as she usually did to take her coffee in bed she came down to breakfast with the boys, thus giving him no time in the surprise her early appearance caused to be aware of that first meeting

Breakfast was hardly finished when a telegram came from Alexander Ogilvie to announce that his eldest son had a brother

"Lucky fellow!" cried Julius boisterously "Imagine what Emil would have been like if he had not had me Well, I vote that, as we've all got up so early, to-day shall be devoted to enquiries into suitable houses for me "

So they took another long drive through the teeming August countryside, to the accompaniment of excited disputes about everything from politics to gardening

When they arrived back at the hotel there was another telegram from his father to John to say that Elise's condition was causing serious anxiety and asking him to return to England at once

"So that's the end of Prague and Budapest and Vienna," said John ruefully "But this must be terrible for my father, poor old chap ".

Before John left Cracow that night Miriam took the opportunity of helping with his packing to see him alone for the first time since they had parted at dawn

"In a way, I am glad you are going, dearest boy, though I pray that when you arrive the need for your going will have passed I shall write to you to-night or to-morrow Do not write to me until you receive my letter Just send a postcard to say you have safely arrived and how you find your stepmother Now, give me those brushes before you forget them, and look, I'll put your comb here "

"I must ask you one thing " John began

"Ask me nothing, dearest boy I am the happiest woman in Europe And the only thing to make me sad will be bad news from you at home But I've a feeling all will be well "

So John went northward in a rumbling train, and although he had to sit upright in the second-class carriage

without even a corner seat he slept soundly through the night

He had expected to go down to Worcestershire, but to his surprise his father met him at the station with the news that Elise was at Church Row

"Thank God, she did take it into her head to change her plans," Alexander Ogilvie ejaculated "The nearer to London the better when complications arise on these occasions We were that much nearer to the medical advice we wanted "

"And how is she?"

"I believe we can fairly say she has turned the corner now But when I telegraphed to you I felt horribly anxious and well, I suppose I was frightened and wanted you near me, John "

Alexander Ogilvie made this admission with the air of apologizing for the emotional awkwardness he must be inflicting on his son, and John for his part was glad that they were sitting side by side in a hansom so that he had a chance to avoid looking at his father without appearing too careless in his manner of receiving the news

"I'm very glad you did telegraph "

"It was a pity to interrupt your Austrian visit "

"I had the best of it in Cracow," said John quickly

The father and son were silent for a while, sitting upright in the cab and staring before them at the comparative sparseness of the traffic in the leisure of the holiday season which was a mark of London at this date

"The boy is to be called David," Alexander Ogilvie announced

"Yes, Elise told me he was to be called David That is if he was a boy It's a good Ogilvie name "

"He weighed nine pounds "

"Is that a good weight?"

"I believe it's a good average weight It's curious what strange comparisons strike people When his grandfather was told the boy's weight he said, 'Hum! Just the weight of a Lee-Metford rifle' Now, I wouldn't have known the weight of a rifle for one thing, and if I had I don't think I should have related it to an infant He's a remarkable fellow, Sir William You ought to get to know him He's likely to be the next Master of the Rolls "

"I'm not quite sure what that is "

"Principal Judge of the Court of Appeal Elise is very devoted to her father "

"I know she is "

"And er she's very devoted to you In fact one of the reasons which decided me to telegraph for you was that I thought she would be glad if you were here "

Another clip-clop silence supervened until it was broken by John this time

"Who are going to be David's godfathers?"

"Ah, I'm glad you've raised that point As a matter of fact Elise has expressed a particular desire that you should be one of them and her father the other I told her I thought it was rather an unusual combination Incidentally er the er infant David that is to say is to be baptized into the Church of England like yourself Elise intends to ask her friend Mrs Cregeen to be the boy's godmother "

"I've not met her "

"An agreeable worldly woman with plenty of money "

"I shan't give him a mug," John proclaimed

"No, I should leave that to Sir William You can give him a knife, spoon, and fork "

"I shall give him a knife and fork, but it will be with a dirk "

"You're going to make a good Scot of him, eh ?"

"I'll do my best," John promised firmly

"I neglected that part of your education, eh ?"

"Well, I think I'll have to be frank and say you did "

"I'm afraid when I look back at it, John, that I neglected most parts of your education The trouble is that time goes by at such a pace in one's thirties and forties You'll have been thinking what an age it is since you were a small boy of seven, but to me it is like yesterday You were grown up before I realized it And now I suppose David will grow up twice as fast as you did "

John looked over his shoulder and caught his father's eye Both of them at once gazed straight ahead over the well-groomed dapple-grey horse between the shafts of the hansom, and the clip-clop silence was not interrupted again until the cab reached St John's Wood Road

"By the way, I haven't told you yet," said the barrister, "that I've been invited to stand as the Liberal candidate for the city of Dunchester There is not much likelihood of a General Election for some years, so that unless an unforeseen bye-election should crop up I'm unlikely to enter Parliament for some time The Unionist majority is 1453, but naturally we need not accept the khaki election as the standard Actually the seat returned a Liberal by a narrow majority in 1895 It is an unusual constituency—an industrialized cathedral city You must

come down with me some time when I address a meeting of my supporters "

Once again John looked over his shoulder at his father's finely cut, florid countenance Even in the abandoned London of early September he was as carefully dressed as if he were going to appear in a sensational libel case or in defence of an accused murderer for whom hardly anybody except himself would hope to secure an acquittal Silk hat tail coat red rose-bud for a buttonhole dark lavender kid gloves full black satin Ascot tie with a pink pearl pin sponge bag trousers patent leather boots gold-mounted tiger-wood cane A terrific amount of trouble had been taken to look unmistakably Mr Alexander Ogilvie, K C

"Have you thought any more about your own future ?" his father asked abruptly

"I'll see what the effect of Oxford is," John replied

"You've no fancy for the diplomatic service? You will have just enough of a private income to be fairly comfortable "

"No, I don't think the Civil Service could be gilded in any way to make it palatable for me," said John "I could not stand a profession which involved waiting to step into the dead men's shoes which had been walking over you all your life And although I can't claim very much first-hand knowledge of Civil Servants I observed that all the people I most disliked at school made a bee-line for the Civil Service "

"My dear boy," his father protested with some warmth, "you are talking rather wildly Let me assure you that the British Civil Service is incomparably the

finest expression of government which the world has yet known "

"Yes, but I happen to distrust government in most shapes, and the more efficient it is the more demoralizing it is for the governed "

"You favour anarchy as an alternative?" his father enquired sarcastically

"Not as an immediate alternative, but I believe that a philosophic anarchy should be the aim of all political thinkers That is to say I believe individual responsibility should be cultivated and not discouraged as it is by the administrative parasites which flourish in the complicated intestines of contemporary civilization "

"Very pretty rhetoric But I suppose I'm the last man who should disdain rhetoric, for it has served me well You are not reconsidering the Bar as a profession?"

"No, I should never have the cynicism which must be required at the beginning At least, I don't think so But perhaps it's a little early to assert that I may change my mind at the Varsity "

"It is possible," his father commented drily

"But apart from that I think it's a mistake for a son to follow his father's profession if in that profession his father has achieved some eminence One would be handicapped by trying to avoid the suggestion that one was imitating one's father, and in trying to avoid imitation one might easily sacrifice the vital element of success, because after all it's most improbable that one would possess in oneself enough personality to be independent of one father's contribution to it "

Alexander Ogilvie paused before replying to this unexpected and gratifying admission He was longing

to ask his son what portion of his character and abilities he considered that he had inherited from himself. He felt if he could once get an answer to this he should have the clue which would enable him to comprehend this baffling product of himself. Yet that uncomfortable paternal dignity still held him back, and at last he took refuge in an embarrassed proposition.

"Family resemblances are rather interesting to work out. I've always thought you took after your mother more than me."

John suddenly divined that the birth of David had filled his father with a sharp curiosity about the measure of his own responsibility for this infant son and that he was longing eagerly for some assurance from his elder son of the important part he had played in his personality to date.

"I think what I've inherited from you," said John, coming straight to the point in a way that brought back Athene Pendarves to her husband more vividly than John dreamed he was doing, "is a whole set of ancestral ambitions and obligations and sentiments and opinions which were stifled by the accursed Scots doctrine of two hundred years that material prosperity was the chief end of man and that the achievement of such material prosperity was the outward sign of God's favour. I think that Scotsmen have been obsessed by the conception of God as a bad-tempered old gentleman with a soft spot for Scotsmen whom, thanks to their canny appreciation of His whims, he enjoys rewarding with large peppermint bull's-eyes, His own red-headed boys, in fact. Sorry," John said to his father's snort of displeasure, "I didn't mean to get off the point. Seriously,

though, I do think that there must have been a lot of convictions which were smothered like the little princes in the Tower by that Richard Crookback the main chance. There was a faint stir under the pillows when you wanted me to go to Fettes or Loretto, but it was a very faint stir, and anyway you probably reminded yourself rightly that Fettes and Loretto are only attempts to make Winchester and Marlborough grow in Scotland, just extra prickly varieties of the English rose but not authentic thistles. Still, I suppose I should be right in assuming that you have never seriously considered you were smothering anything. I don't think you can have, or you wouldn't be proposing to contest an English cathedral city at the next election."

"You are right. I regard Scotland as part of a much greater whole, and I am grateful for a happy political arrangement which allowed Scotland a freedom of development unimaginable before the Union of the two countries."

"Well, we mustn't start arguing about that," said John, "or we shall get right off the point. But I must have inherited this very definite point of view about Scotland from your blood, though I'll agree that the Cornish half of me has been a sympathetic recipient of that point of view. I have no doubt that fundamentally the Cornish are also subconsciously aware that somehow they have been pushed out of things and that the controlling influence of the country to which they are attached is not an influence which represents their basic attitude toward life. And then my French grandmother may have supplied the breath which blew these smouldering beliefs into the semblance of a small flicker."

"I don't know that I can follow your fancies, John

I consider all these supposed racial influences highly problematical ”

“But if you refuse to admit them, why admit the influence of heredity in anything? Why then look in me for any characteristics of yourself? If there can be transmission of a trick of the eyelid or a turn of the head, there can surely be transmission of the mental attitude which first engendered them, and if of that mental attitude, why not of the mental attitude developed by inbreeding over hundreds of years, which is more likely to be temporarily suppressed than permanently destroyed by a comparatively few years of miscegenation?”

“You have a most fluent vocabulary, John ”

“Ah, I dare say I got *that* from you ”

“Yes, I dare say you did,” the barrister agreed with a touch of complacency

“And now will you tell me something, father? What makes you prefer to defend an apparently hopeless case? It surely isn’t entirely for the sake of the popular applause? And it certainly isn’t for the material gain ”

“Indeed no,” Alexander Ogilvie assented fervidly “A man pays much less to escape from the gallows than from a tiresome wife or a broken contract, which of course is what we should expect under our super-excellent legal system ”

“Then isn’t your enjoyment in undertaking these apparently hopeless cases a secret pleasure in getting the better of this super-excellent legal system? And mightn’t the hidden prompting of that impulse come from a form of national self-assertion?”

“Too subtle, too subtle altogether,” the barrister

decided Then he suddenly put an arm up and lifted the trap in the roof

"Don't drive this admirable animal of yours quite so hard up this hill, cabby We are not in such a hurry as all that "

"No, sir, thank you, sir "

The cabman reined in the smart grey to a walk for this steep part of Fitzjohn's Avenue Presently John noticed that the hansom was passing Claremount Gardens For a moment his mind was back in Cracow, and he did not continue his eager argument

"And yet perhaps there may be something in it," his father was saying reflectively "It's certainly an ingenious point Perhaps in a year or two you'll think more kindly of the Bar "

John shook his head

"I'm afraid I shan't My trouble would be that I wouldn't accept any brief which wasn't for the defence And so I should moulder away of inanition in my chambers We shall be at Church Row very soon now I'm longing to see this brother of mine "

"Well, you can't make much of him at present," the father warned his elder son "The nurse indeed professed to detect a likeness to myself, but I fancy that is the usual amiable sycophancy indulged in by these peripatetic Lucinas known as monthly nurses My personal opinion is that David looks remarkably like every other recently born infant I have seen "

Church Row was still as an old coloured print in the sunlight of that September day. The trees in the middle of the road were motionless with summer's heavy green, but the flowers in the window-boxes were withering for want of water in those houses with drawn blinds whose residents had not come back to town from their holidays, and their faded lobelias and calceolarias, their parched geraniums and marguerites gave a premature autumnal suggestion to the atmosphere. In the brief minute during which the hansom drove along that mellow Georgian promenade John had a sudden prevision of his infant brother's long childhood in Hampstead, saw him holding tight to his nurse's skirt as they entered that mysterious narrow lane which led down to Frogna! , saw him shuffling through the dead November leaves strewn thick in Holly Place, saw him hurrying excitedly along up Heath Street to sail his boat on one of the ponds, saw him by his nursery window gazing down across the tree-tops upon the glittering haze over London and then the heavy front door closed behind his father and himself to shut out the sound of the hansom's swing round and of the hooves of the dapple-grey walking sedately away down the empty sunny street.

"How's your mistress, Watson?"

"Very comfortable now, sir, and anxious to know when Mr John was arriving and would like to see him at once."

"Don't you think I'd better change first, father? I'm pretty grubby for a sick room after my journey."

"Yes, you go and have a bath and come along presently. I'll go up to her now. I'm in the spare room, by the way."

Alexander Ogilvie had already left his wife's room when his elder son tapped at the dressing-room door. He had not felt capable of standing the strain of inspecting his infant son in the presence of John.

Nurse Rankin, a plump dark little woman, came forward to usher him in.

"She's much better. Ever so much better. We were really very worried three days ago, but all is going smoothly now. Mrs Ogilvie?"

"Come in."

John passed through into the bedroom which had that strange hushed mystery shed by the presence of a newly born child, combined with that faintly medicated atmosphere of the professional sick-room.

"Dear John, I am so glad to see you," said Elise, putting a hand over the coverlet to greet him. He leant over and kissed her pale cheek.

"I am so sorry you've had such a rotten time."

"I'm so sorry that you were fetched all the way back from Cracow. I feel a guilty wretch. And look at the cause of it."

She lifted the edge of a finely woven woollen shawl and showed the sleeping infant.

"Isn't he a splendid little fellow?" exclaimed the nurse, in that tone with which monthly nurses manage to suggest an exceptionally definite personality for their latest achievement.

John consoled himself for an inability to contribute any striking comment on his minute half-brother with a reflection that nobody except a monthly nurse ever did contribute any striking comment. Of a kitten one could say it promised to be a well-marked tabby. Of a peach

or, a pear one could observe with what skill the moment for gathering it had been chosen

"He seems very quiet "

It was not a brilliant remark, but it was the best he could manage

"As quiet as an angel," the nurse agreed enthusiastically "Though, mind you, his lordship can make himself heard when he wants anything Yes, indeed he can, the rascal "

With this she retired into the dressing-room and after closing the door between was faintly heard making those busy tinkling little noises associated with the presence of a nurse in the house

"Pull up that chair to the side of the bed and tell me about your Cracow experiences "

John launched forth on a severe indictment of the monstrous partitions of Poland and declared his conviction that Europe would not be Europe until Poland was united and free again

"Their position is not quite so bad in Austrian Poland as it is under the Prussians and the Russians, but it's bad enough It's the Ireland of Eastern Europe, and the Poles have the same magnificent consciousness of their national status as the Irish They're waiting for a European war to recreate Poland, and of course the Irish are waiting for that too There was a splendid fellow called Pilsudski who's coming to London this autumn I didn't meet him, but some of the young revolutionaries were talking about him at a musical party we went to It was rather wonderful Songs and recitations and plenty of Chopin in his most martial moods I got very much worked up Nobody, however, seemed to think there

was a chance of a successful rising under present conditions. The three black eagles would be too much for the white eagle. It would be the same in Ireland now. Not even a Garibaldi could do anything against modern methods of warfare. But when Francis Joseph dies, that will be the time. There's bound to be a war between Austria and Russia, and that will be Poland's opportunity."

"John, John, don't talk in that bloodthirsty way about war, with this sleeping infant's future already tormenting my imagination. I seem to have chosen a most bellicose pair of godfathers. Alec told you what my father said about David's weight being the same as some rifle or other? And now here are you talking about Armageddon as if it were a cricket match. Did you do nothing else in Poland except discuss revolution? How is Mrs. Stern?"

"She's quite fit."

"I must get to know her better when she comes back to London this autumn. I've always reproached myself for that silly remark I made to you about her that day we went to the Ibsen matinée. And now tell me about Rose. When is she coming back from Switzerland?"

"She's back."

"Oh, then I feel a little less guilty over spoiling your Polish visit."

"Well, as a matter of fact she's going to marry a man called Henry Falconer some time this autumn."

"John!"

"Oh, I've got over it now. You see, there was a hopeless row about her going to that dance with me in May. I didn't tell you about it at the time because I didn't want to be pitied. But that was the reason she went to Switzerland, and she got engaged there to this chap

Falconer He is a brother officer of mine An awfully decent fellow Actually it is the right marriage for Rose She'll be Lady Warburton one day And of course plenty of money I think they're having rather a job to keep up Medlicott I see now how absurd it was for me to expect her people would take me seriously "

"All the same, I can't help feeling a sentimental regret It could have been a lovely idyll And when one is so happy oneself one enjoys the happiness of other people Dear John, and I am so very happy "

"You've given everybody a jolly good fright I think it has shaken father up a bit "

"I was very anxious to see you myself, John, in case anything was going to happen to me, because I wanted to tell you how much I relied on you to help David in the future But your father was just as anxious for you to be here as I was You know, he's very touching Such a child in many ways He's still frightened of you Of course it will be different with David, because by the time David is your age Alec will be getting on for seventy and he'll have all the self-confidence of a grandfather I expect the struggle will be between David and me "

She turned her head to look at the sleeping infant beside her

"It's foolish and egotistical to suppose that any particular importance attaches itself to this child of mine, for the same importance is attached to every child who is born But I can't help wondering what lies before this child born in the first year of the new century John, what a responsibility it is, what a fearful responsibility! Deliberately to bring into the world a human creature

and expose it to all the misery and pain and fret of life I ask myself now how I ever dared to do it "

"David will have a much better chance than a lot of kids "

"I know he will, John But I kept thinking of you and of the way you lost your mother when you were a little boy There was a moment when after the agony of it all I felt myself slipping away from life and when my will bade me go, and it was the sudden thought of you left to yourself when you were so small which roused me to the wrong I was doing, and it was then I began to struggle to live How strange that I am able to talk to you so easily about myself John, you will help David, won't you? In a way you'll be more like his father than Alec who will be the fond grandpapa "

"Yes, I dare say he will be "

"He most certainly will be All the severity and the discipline will have to come from you and me I know Alec thinks he failed dismally with you, and that will make him more determined than ever to spoil David "

They went on talking for a while longer about trivial topics until the nurse came in

"I think that's a long enough visit for the present, Mrs Ogilvie It's really time you took your rest now "

John leaned over Elise and as he kissed her cheek he whispered an assurance of his devotion to her and David

"Elise is very fond of you Your coming back has done her a great deal of good," Alexander Ogilvie told his son that evening when Watson had withdrawn from the dining-room and left them to the filberts and the wine

"I'm very fond of *her*," John replied

"We shall have the christening in about three weeks I was wondering if you would care to go back to your friends for say another fortnight? It doesn't seem quite fair to keep you in London at this rather dull time of the year "

"Oh, I shall be quite happy In fact I rather like London when it's empty and quiet I'm near enough to being at school to get a holiday thrill out of it Beside, I want to get various things for Oxford "

It was in this mood of gloating over freedom from school that on the next day John rode over to Kensington and sat by himself on the verandah of the deserted cricket pavilion to contemplate the great green expanse of the playing-fields across which not even a solitary gardener moved, and the great crimson bulk of the school buildings, the untenanted air of which made that old bogey of a gilded clockface appear so bland and benevolent The goal-posts on big side and middle side and little side had already been put up in preparation for the Michaelmas term The scoring-board had been pushed into a corner, the figures of the last innings recorded at the end of July all that was left of the school cricket of 1901 Friends of his would have contributed to that total, and the score of the last man out would certainly have been the score of somebody familiar to him for many years of that intimate association of school which as soon as it was broken seemed like some incredible pre-existence in another world Yes, the goal-posts were already up, and within less than three weeks some of the new boys would be playing their first game on little side under the eyes of Kirkham hoping to spot a future Varsity blue Most of them would be pushed into the scrum at first

'Keep your bottoms down there and shove hard, you little blighters' And most of them would remain in the scrum for the rest of their schooldays To play half or three-quarter in one's first year was usually a triumph of looks and personality rather than a recognition of skill

Would David be coming here as a new boy in September 1912 or 1913? Would he himself twelve years hence look back at school through the enchantment of distance and urge that St James's was the best place for his young half-brother? Well, if David was doomed to go to a public school, perhaps a day school would be less of a purgatory than a boarding school But David might enjoy school David might be born to flourish at a public school When he went up to Oxford he would make a careful comparative study of the types produced by the various public schools And on that study his advice over David's education should be based However, if David showed signs of being the kind of boy who did not flourish at his best in a public school he should find in his elder brother one who would fight hard to save him from the dreary experience After all, people could not turn round and tell him that he was no judge because his own school life had been so miserable It had *not* been miserable It had been superficially most agreeable He could fairly claim fifteen months after he had left it that he had been one of the most popular figures at St James's And that popularity had if anything added to the boredom of it Acute unhappiness would in some respects have been preferable If he had been bullied or ragged or shunned he would have had a grievance against life, and that might have made a good revolutionary of him As it was, in theory he was a revolutionary, but

he had such an amount of amiable tolerance for everybody and such a propensity for positively liking nearly everybody that even if he was given the chance of revolutionary activity he should always find it most difficult to bring himself to the point of putting a number of negatively harmless people even to inconvenience. People were all comic or pathetic or lovable. Could he think of anybody whom he hated or whom he ever had hated? John shook his head. He did not hate even Dick Medlicott. Temporary exasperation was the most violent hostile emotion with which any individual had inspired him. He could choke with rage over the behaviour of the Prussians in 1870, or even over the partition of Poland a century earlier. He could contemplate obliterating Turkey from the map of the world. The English treatment of Ireland turned the pages of history to scarlet before his eyes. The blood of the Jacobites was warm as in the days when it flowed. Elizabeth he would have rejoiced to see slowly burnt alive after being racked first. He could not imagine that if he had lived in the days when active revolt against his historical enemies was possible he would not have plotted against them and fought against them with those others who had plotted and fought. Yet if he were to meet a bestial harridan like Elizabeth in a modern omnibus he would probably offer her his seat, which would be as ignominious as Raleigh's contemptible gesture with his cloak.

And if he could not achieve hot hate how was he going to achieve the cold hate a successful revolutionary must have for the opponents who fought against his destruction and impeded his reconstruction? It was believed that only they who could hate were able to love. Was he going

through life with a perpetually amiable regard for everybody, but no capacity to lose the world for love? He had surrendered weakly over Rose. He should have defied Mrs. Medlicott and searched Switzerland until he found her. He had actually blamed Rose for her own willingness to bow before parental demands, but had he not himself bent an equally lowly head? Could he be allowed to have been really in love with a girl if he was prepared to recognize in the man she had chosen in preference to himself not merely a good fellow but a more suitable husband for Rose? Did it not expose the whole of his emotional state to a grave suspicion of superficiality? Yet would a woman like Mrs. Stern but he must not think of her now as Mrs. Stern. That instead of thinking of her as Miriam he had thought of her as Mrs. Stern might be another indication of this suspected superficiality. Had he been deeply enough moved by the tribute she had paid his raw personality? Yet would a woman like Miriam have found in him anything to love if he were as superficial as he was fearing? To be sure, the phenomenon of a woman like her falling in love with a boy young enough to be her son was well known, but nobody could accuse Miriam Stern of being an empty-headed, vain or stupid woman. Moreover, she had shown that she treasured their intimacy too deeply to let it be destroyed in the end by yielding to what would be called self-indulgence. She had demonstrated her belief in his own ability to live up to the standard of that intimacy.

Yes, it did look as if life had been too easy for him to feel the profounder emotions. He was glad in one way that he was not jealous or envious or resentful of superiority.

or even personally ambitious for power, but there was no doubt that if he were he would find it much easier to translate dreams into action. Still perhaps he had not yet been tested sufficiently by circumstance. After all he would not be nineteen for another month, and when he remembered his contemporaries at St James's he had a right to feel that although fortune had given him the opportunity to delve into experience more deeply and venture farther than the rest of them, he had still great tracts of unexplained life before him. A wider experience, and this tendency toward an amiable tolerance might correct itself. At least he had never succumbed to an amiable tolerance of school itself. In spite of being liked by most ushers and most boys, in spite of being envied by most of his fellows for the ease with which he passed through the trials of a schoolboy's existence, and in spite of being left at the end of his schooldays without a single remembrance of a wrong or an injustice to himself, he had hated the abstract idea of school from the first moment to the last of that penal servitude. A convict could hardly hate his prison more savagely. To look now at those innumerable windows in that hideous gothic muddle of red brick was to feel a deep pity for the slaves who had to endure even as long as another day of its engulfing ennui. Yes, if that infant up at Hampstead did not by the time he was eight years old display an indecent taste for being enslaved, he would fight for him to be given an imaginative education. What really was it which had made him hate school so much? Perhaps it was the deliberate process of standardization for which it stood. It set out either directly by the precepts of authority or indirectly by the example of those under

that authority to discourage the slightest sign of the individual's attempting to differentiate himself. Everybody must think that the end of a boy's ambition is to obtain a place in the Fifteen or the Eleven, or to win races or boxing matches or gymnastic competitions. Authority might excuse a boy from achieving this ambition if he showed by his intelligence and his application that he was likely to gain a scholarship at Oxford or Cambridge, not because such a scholarship would help him to live his own life, but because it would redound to the glory of the school and provide the first rung in that dreary ladder to a post in the Civil Service. The brains of the English public schools were being developed to create a parasitic class the utility and efficiency of which could not hide the fact that they were parasites, skilfully though that condition might be disguised.

John smiled to himself. He was remembering an essay set by Askew on that biting phrase of Tacitus, *corruptissima republica plurimae leges*. In the previous week more than half the members of the Lower Sixth had revealed in a questionnaire upon the aims and objects of their education that their ambition was to become members of the Civil Service. So he had supported Tacitus in his own essay on the proposition that numerous laws were the sign of a state's decay and had founded his arguments upon the increasing interference of the Government with the citizen and the creation thereby of a class of men employed to put into effect unnecessary laws which must ultimately destroy the state by bringing into existence more people to make laws than there were citizens to obey them. Askew had enjoyed reading one passage of this essay in which Civil Servants had been

likened to worms preying upon the intestines of the state, and had asked the members of the Lower Sixth bound for the Civil Service whether Ogilvie's comparison appealed to their own notion of themselves. John laughed aloud in the empty pavilion at the recollection of those absurd indignant faces looking up from their scrabbled desks at the impudent jester who mocked at their sacred belief in their own potential utility to mankind and jeered at their longing for the security of the pension which would reward that utility! 'Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of law!' In another few years those earnest swots in the Lower Sixth would be ascribing as much importance to their printed forms as once they had ascribed to the notes of Moproe's *Homeric Grammar*. Yet although one might laugh at them they were as much of a menace to the health of the nation as the damned lawyers they were beginning to oust from their dominium of three centuries. To this had Merry England sunk—to be a breeding-ground for lawyers and Civil Servants, for shopkeepers and cynical journalists.

Emil was right. The future vigour of the nation was in the keeping of the *plebs*. The *bourgeoisie* was exhausted, and its final effort in the system of popular education it had devised would be to turn the *plebs* into a *bourgeoisie*. For the moment they were grumbling at the uppishness of the working classes which was being brought about by this board-school education. There were jokes in *Punch* about servants who asked if they might practise on the pianos of their mistresses. That kind of feeble snobbery was rampant. But in their hearts they were grateful for this civilizing process which would stave off for ever in England anything like the French Revolution.

The sneering at this education arose from an instinct to make it appear desirable and precious to those who were to be tamed by it. If the *bourgeoisie* as Emil called them after reading this fellow Marx, at whom he must really have a go himself, had any real vigour in themselves they would have devised a new education for their own young at the same time as imposing upon the young of the *plebs* this genteel veneer designed to keep them dutiful slaves with an illusion of being better off than their fathers.

Yet beyond revising a Latin Primer which had been in use for over a century no change had been made in the education of a century. It was not that a so-called classical education was bad as such: it was the wretched use these damned follow-my-leaders made of their opportunities. The literature of Greece and Rome was turned into a device for extracting a system of marks for competitive examinations. The history of the four clearly defined nations which made up the geographical entity known as the British Isles was doled out for a couple of hours a week from some biased little volume written to glorify the infallibility, impeccability and invulnerability of the England which had tried to absorb the other three. This tendentious presentation of history roused a vague hostility in all who could not claim to be purely English, and that meant at least half the boys in a great London school like St James's, whereas the object of teaching history should be to present the truth, were it never so unpalatable, because it was imperfection not perfection which inspired love. And the literature of England which was her unassailable glory was defiled term after term by preposterous annotated

editions of Pope's *Epistles* or Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in which an accurate knowledge of the notes was esteemed far above the appreciation of the subject. As well exalt the droppings of a nightingale above its song. Add to this curriculum a little French, a little mathematics, an hour a week of the Greek Testament, half an hour with the Kings of Judah and Israel, and, until the security of the Sixth was attained, an hour and a half of what was called drawing, presided over by three barbarians in a chaos of plaster casts and hideous studies of still life, which gave sixteen boys out of twenty a hatred of art for the rest of their lives. Such was a classical education, the cultural background of a code of behaviour in which the most important features were to think, act, speak, look, eat, work and play like your fellows. That it served well for the majority was not a valid argument in its favour. The paralysing effect on the minority at a period when, if one could judge by the South African war, the crisis of the British Empire was at hand was too grave a fault.

The gilded face of the clock stared blandly and benevolently across the empty stretch of green sward, mocking John's resentment against the education of which it far more than the Headmaster was the real president. It beamed with the complacency of ordered time. Half-past nine till one for classics, twenty to two until twenty to three for football or cricket, three to five for the hotchpotch of history, French, mathematics and English literature. Beaming day in day out through the terms moving with intolerable slowness, day in day out through the holidays moving with intolerable speed.

"Well, if I can save that infant brother of mine from your butterfaced tyranny, I will," John said aloud to the

clock "I was bound to your tyranny without being consulted My friend Emil uses you for his own cool purpose But you missed Julius, and you shan't have David "

It was twenty minutes to four The benevolent expression had left the face of the clock The hands were now set in a glum droop In another three weeks it would have nearly seven hundred boys safely imprisoned at this hour, seven hundred captives unable to congratulate themselves that even half the weary afternoon had passed And perhaps some wretched group in one of the sunless classrooms on the other side of the school would have learnt for repetition and be mumbling above the rumble of the omnibuses along the Hammersmith Road

"Two Voices are there one is of the sea,
One of the mountains, each a mighty Voice,
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!"

John left the cricket pavilion and wheeled his bicycle to the entrance of the school grounds He had suddenly decided to go round to Gladwyn Road and see if by any chance the Fenwicks were at home On his way he passed one or two small Jacobeans whom he only recognized as such by their school caps They were no doubt new boys of last year to whom he would not be even a name Poor little brutes, they had at least five years of their sentence still to serve.

The grey portico above the Fenwicks' front door seemed as remote in time from his own experience as the

columns of a ruined temple Yet while after ringing the bell he waited for the door to open he found he could recall the pattern and colours of the stained glass in the upper panel from the faint indications of it which appeared on the outside He could see through by the help of his memory to the hall within, that hall which a mere eighteen months ago had seemed fraught with his destiny He was on the point of ringing again when a voice hailed him from the area

"The family's away," it proclaimed

John looked down to see a large rubicund woman, no doubt the caretaker

"When will they be back?"

"Not for another month yet."

"I'll leave a card "

"What was you selling then?"

"I'm not selling anything "

John scribbled '*sorry to have missed you*' on his card, and handed it down through the railings to the rubicund woman who looked at the small oblong of cardboard most suspiciously

"What do you expect me to do with this 'ere?" she asked finally

"I should leave it on the table in the front hall "

She rubbed her squab nose with the palm of her hand in a gesture which evidently implied considerable uncertainty as to the advisableness of such a course

"Well," she sniffed, "if ever I was to happen to trail upstairs for anythink I'll try and remember to leave it on the hall table But I don't take no responsibility, mind I'm just acting caretaker I'm not supposed to take nothink to do with nothink else "

"Do you know where the family is?"

"Yes, I know where they *is*, but that doesn't say I'm going to tell *you* where they *is*, young man, does it?"

John made up his mind not to press her for the information. By calling he had shown his desire to see the Fenwicks again. Perhaps one of them would find his card and write to him. Hetty had once foretold that he would pass out of their lives. Well, he had called upon them. They might find his card, and if they did not find it, perhaps that would be the easiest way. So much had happened since he was a familiar figure in this house, and friendships with great gaps between the friends were unsatisfactory affairs. It might be a superficial way of looking at it, but already it began to appear as if friendship depended for its endurance upon continuity of association.

And with this thought occurring to him as he mounted his bicycle John resolved to let nothing undone by him expose his friendship with Edward Fitzgerald to the peril of desuetude. He would call now at Fitz's house. Fitz himself was unlikely to be at home, but the doctor or his wife might be there. In Trelawny Road he was told that Mrs Fitzgerald was in.

"Why now, Ogilvie, isn't this a very great pleasure! But it's not Ogilvie I ought to be calling you," Fitz's mother corrected herself quickly, "and you'll be good enough to excuse me, Mr Ogilvie."

As she looked at him John's fancy was struck by a sense of her remoteness from this commonplace room. She appeared as completely out of place here as a Giotto angel in a Luke Fildes interior. Her pale blue eyes sought an eternity which her faded anxious hands strove to shut out for the sake of present duty, and her gentle

voice was impersonal like a distant echo, so that when she asked him where he had been all this long time he felt that he had returned to this house after many years of absence

"I'm just back from Poland, and I thought I must come and see you after such a long time "

"That's a good Catholic country, I believe And it's you that has come at the right moment We're expecting Edward back this afternoon He's been over in Ireland for three weeks Come along, and we'll be getting the tea ready "

"How's the doctor?"

"The doctor is in grand shape He's away out on his rounds just now, but he should be in soon "

"And Ellen?"

Mrs Fitzgerald shook a distressed head

"Ellen is away on this acting of hers I don't like it at all, Ogilvie But she set her heart on it, and there was no checking her No, no, she was just set on it But where she took the notion I don't know at all It was surely not from her parents She's in Eastbourne this week Edward had some friends to see in Liverpool or he should have been back by now "

Mrs Fitzgerald looked anxiously at the clock John divined that she looked anxiously at the clock all the time her son was away from London They had been sitting over tea for about five minutes when Fitz himself came in His thin face was sunburnt, and his pale blue eyes lighted up at the sight of John

"The Judge, begod! Well, I've had a great time, mother I tramped the length and breadth of Kerry and Clare, and have learnt more Irish than I ever managed,

before The celebration of the centenary of '98 three years back has had a great influence There's something stirring Oh, I've had a great time Our tenant at Tinoran was very decent and gave me a couple of days' fishing up Glencar And I had one day with the grouse Well, well, Judge boy, it's good to see you again "

Presently the doctor came in, and the tale of Edward's wanderings in Munster had to be told in greater detail, for he was anxious to know how every familiar place had appeared, his soft voice taking on an added tenderness with every question as if he were at the bedside of a sick child After tea he went off to the surgery, and Fitz carried John away to his own small room at the end of the front hall

"I'm glad you came this afternoon, Judge," he said "Do you remember in the spring of last year that debate on Home Rule after the Union tea?"

"Very well "

"Do you remember that we walked back to my place after it, and that I told you a sacrifice of blood was necessary to give Ireland life again?"

"I shall never forget it," and as if it were yesterday John was walking with his friend through the acrid foggy air of that March evening and seeing the fanatical expression on his gaunt face, and the wide eloquent mouth so vivid a red even by the sickly glow of the incandescent gaslamp

"And I told you that I was not sure how the sacrifice of blood would be offered?"

John nodded gravely

"The vision came to me on the night of the Assumption "

"Of the Assumption?" John repeated in surprise

He was thinking of that aspiring red brick church in the market-place of Cracow and hearing the echo of that broken trumpet tune

"Yes, I had walked from Dingle to Tralee and was feeling pretty fagged out I had climbed Mount Brandon the previous day The bed I was given in the small hotel was lumpy as hell, and in spite of being so cursed tired I couldn't sleep So I set out to amuse myself by planning out the kind of country a free Ireland might be I had restored the language, distributed the land, protected the fisheries, expropriated the absentee landlords, and was just assisting at a grand and glorious ceremony at which the elected representatives of the Irish Republic were proclaiming a sovereign nation's withdrawal from the British Empire when I felt as if something had struck me a hell of a blow over the heart, and before I knew where I was I had landed as it seemed to me head over heels on the floor I suppose if I'd been asked as a medical student what had happened I should have guessed an attack of pseudo-angina brought on by exertion But it isn't so easy to find a rational explanation for the sequel Sitting on the floor of that hotel bedroom, and feeling a bit of a damn fool with my head in a whirl, I looked up over the mantelpiece and saw that the solid wall had turned to a kind of mist which gradually developed into a view of a patch of country I had particularly noticed during my tramp from Dingle to Tralee earlier in the day You know the way you'll see the view outside thrown on the table of a camera obscura?"

John nodded

"Well, it was like that But by the side of a bohieren there was a small heap of stones with a white cross stuck in to the top of them And while I was staring at my grave beside the road, for I knew somehow that it was my grave, the Kerry country and the bohieren and the white cross on the heap of stones faded from the wall and in their place I read in blood-red letters *Pray for the soul of Edward Fitzgerald I R A who died in defence of Ireland*, but when I tried to read the date I could not read it, for though it was inscribed all right and I could read the R I P after it, the figures themselves were an illegible blur And then the words faded out and I vomited on the floor like a dog Judge, that was an assurance that the sacrifice of blood will be asked and that it will be offered and that it will be accepted But when, when? And the date was there, Judge It was there if I could only have read the blasted figures "

"What would I R A mean?"

"Irish Republican Army The Fenians started that forty years ago And the I R A is not yet dead After sitting on the top of Mount Brandon the day before and looking over Kerry and the ocean I had prayed by St Brandon's holy well for the salvation of Ireland, but I never felt so far away from any answer to a prayer of mine The ocean went on winking lazily below, togged out in silver like a fat lazy whore winking at me from a sofa The mountains and the bogs of Kerry dreamed on in the warmth of summer It was the peace fullest country under the sun But Ireland will not be saved by peace No, and Ireland will not be saved by a mob of Hibernian playboys yelling together in the British House of Commons No, begod, nor by

Nationalist conventions in Chicago and New York Nor by obstruction of a lot of la-di-da Tories in Parliament And Ireland will not be saved by a bevy of draggle-tailed women with haystacks of hair, stringing away at a harp and warbling about Deirdre and Grania And refusal to pay rent will not save Ireland Nor boycott nor cattle-driving Dynamite will not do it any more than moaning about Dark Rosaleen over a bottle of Johnnie Jameson A deliberate sacrifice must be offered Life must come through death And on the top of Mount Brandon I prayed to be allowed to offer that sacrifice to which the answer at the moment seemed a sleepy peace of land and sea It was in Tralee the answer came that night But when, Judge, when will it be? The date was a blur Never mind, the date was written even if I could not read it and therefore I can be sure that this death will come in a way and on a day which will feed the life of Ireland But not a word of this to anybody, Judge I don't want my mother to fret herself sick over my bloodstained future And I don't want to be exasperated by advice from her pet priests Perhaps she'll be gone before my hour comes to me Judge, you'd never understand in a hundred years of telling how happy I feel since that night in Tralee And I vowed next day at Mass that on every feast of Our Blessed Lady I would make my communion and ask her intercession to let this sacrifice be consummated "

Fitz's eyes were blazing John looked at him enviously

"I wish I had so clear a vision of the future as you have had," he said Then after a moment or two of hesitation he related to Fitz his own experience while he was sitting

in the church of St Mary at Cracow, spellbound by the living glory of Veit Stoss's triptych

"Will I interpret, Judge?"

"Yes, if you can find an interpretation "

"I'd say it was the grace of God But you'll have to find out for yourself the way to take advantage of that grace It would be easy enough to recognize a call to be received into the Church, but if you'll let me give you a bit of advice, Judge, I wouldn't be in too much of a hurry to become a Catholic I've noted one or two of these conversions about your age, and they're too emotional They're apt to froth away like the head on a glass of Guinness I don't think it's much use in these days to seek salvation in a spasm of vague emotion You want to test your reason and your history before you take a plunge like that My religion is as much a part of me as the hair on my head, but when you've got to put it on like a wig you want to be pretty certain that it isn't going to blow off with the next change of wind "

"But perhaps it's the lack of a stronghold of the mind like the Catholic Church which keeps me wandering about in this wide open country where in whatever direction I walk the view is equally charming and the horizon equally distant If I were an Irishman and a Catholic like you, Fitz, I believe I should have the fixity of purpose you have But you have in your country and your Church a double assurance that whatever you do for or believe of both must be an act of virtue The people of Ireland wish to sever themselves from any connection with England They may not have reached a conclusion yet how that severance is to be brought about but in the hearts of the great majority of Irishmen the

wish to be themselves does exist and the will to be themselves can be roused. You are only one of many Irishmen who have dedicated themselves to the rousing of this will. Beyond that, you have in your religion an assurance of the truth and therefore a conviction that the freedom of your country must be for that country's good. The Poles are in the same position. I heard of a man in Poland called Pilsudski who says that two machine guns are worth a cartload of books for a country which is not free. You couldn't say that without an assurance that you held the truth. And I think the fundamental cause for the English misunderstanding of the Irish is what to them seems this reckless violence. They lack a creed which assures them so practically and so positively as Catholicism that this life on earth is a preparation for eternity. Therefore they are not prepared to do anything which will ensure that preparation's being helped. I'm in that position myself. I can't believe that personal immortality is true and simultaneously I can't believe that it is not true. So I push the question aside and begin to speculate how life on earth can be made as comfortable as possible for everybody in case it should be the only life there is. I am sure that if one sought a reason for this growing preoccupation of Western man with humanitarianism it is the growing doubt of there being any existence except the life we live upon this earth."

"You'll have to turn socialist, Judge."

"You say that contemptuously."

"Not at all."

"Anyway, we can't go on very much longer as we are. Damn it, we're not Victorians. My stepmother has just produced an infant son, and I'll see that he does not

imbibe any of the poisons of that tainted epoch How are you getting on at the hospital?"

"You handed that back very neatly, Judge"

"What?"

"My socialist gibe But thank God, I've found that by staying in London I can help Ireland, and so I'm not feeling so bitter at the idea of being a general practitioner in Trelawny Road And my hour will come But that's a secret, Judge I've told nobody else except you So don't treat me as the yeoman captain treated the croppy boy"

"I shall probably resign my commission when I go up to Oxford You'll have to come up and see me there"

"And you'll have to come with me to Kerry and Clare next summer, and we'll find that place where one day there'll be a cross to my memory"

"Yes, I will Don't let's drift apart, Fitz I hadn't realized how easy it is to drift apart"

"Come on, Judge, we'll go round the corner and have one When a man talks about drifting apart, a Guinness is called for"

So they went off to the Pines Hotel and had one

The next day John received a long letter from Miriam Stern.

*Poste Restante,
Lemberg,
Sept 1, 1901*

My dearest John,

Emil and Julius have just gone out to find out about our journey to Lemberg, where we are proposing to go to-morrow in order to make it a centre from which

so set out on our preliminary search for Julius's house I hope my maternal fondness is not making me behave like a lunatic However, I'm glad to say that Emil has been converted to the plan, and that consoles me because Emil does seem to me—more maternal fondness—extraordinarily wise And his comprehension of me is devastating It was the awareness of that more than anything which gave me the strength, if not to resist entirely this wonderful experience, at any rate to prevent its complete mastery over my present and future

And it has been a wonderful experience for me, John Perhaps, when you held me in your arms throughout that night at summer's end, that season so meet a season for her whom you held, you thought you were able to understand a little of what it was meaning to me, but it was all far more perfect than you at your age could dream I shall wear that night, beloved boy, like a sapphire upon my heart And now before I let my pen drop upon the paper and sit dreaming like a schoolgirl let me force myself to write that I hope you did not have too uncomfortable a journey and that you slept in the train and that the crossing was kind and smooth And I hope too that your charming stepmother continues to get better It was good of you to think of telegraphing to me when you arrived that you had found things at home less serious than you had feared I wonder what you are feeling like with a brother nineteen years younger than yourself It's a solemn and admonishing thought for me that when this infant is your age I shall be verging upon sixty and that you will be almost the same sedate age as I am now But you will not be feeling then that to fall in love with a girl twenty years younger than yourself is a piece of

folly—at any rate in the eyes of the world When you were the size of this brother of yours and I was an unmarried girl we were at the beginning of the 'eighties, horrified by the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish in Phoenix Park and laughing at the æsthetic movement and wearing tight many-flounced skirts and buying at Jay's if we could afford it, or at Peter Robinson's if we were not quite so well off, mantles which we called 'visites' It seems such an ineffably long time ago And I wonder what I would have said if somebody had pointed to you in your perambulator and prophesied that nearly twenty years hence I should find in the arms of that infant the supreme expression of my emotional being

When I was a small girl I had such heroic dreams of love, but my father's death and the loss of my brother made me look on men as creatures to be consoled above everything, and I think I married Ernest because I was sorry for him and because in my vanity I believed I should be able to make him happy It is difficult when I look at two boys like Emil and Julius to say to myself that my marriage was a mistake, merely because I did not find it like one of the heroic dreams of my girlhood And yet why should a girl have such dreams unless they are inspired by a profound idealism over the relationship of man to woman? I can't help resenting sometimes that the future of humanity should apparently be quite independent of passionate love It seems to me somehow unnatural that two people can be casually linked by the sexual act and produce between them children superior as often as not to children produced by two people who are deeply in love with each other And yet we have to

face the fact that this is so. The East has anticipated this kind of criticism from its women by making its women submissive to their husbands and laying down the principle that sexual gratification belongs of right only to the men. And yet the East always assumes that women will cheat their husbands if they can. Nowhere is women's natural depravity more insistently proclaimed than in the East. You will realize how much of our Eastern origin remains with us Jews of the West when you remember that in the ghettos of Central Europe to-day a Jewish woman shaves her head when she is married and for the rest of her life wears a wig to guard herself against the likelihood of attracting the glances of another man!

Why am I writing all this to you? I suppose I am bolstering up my resolve to make that night in Cracow an isolated event in both our lives. But do not think that I am weakening even if I do find it necessary to protect my resolve. I do not believe that were I able to delude myself with the fancy that I could hold you as my lover until death I would surrender to that fancy, because I love you enough to comprehend that whatever your future path may be you could not walk along it freely, tied to a woman twenty years older than yourself. I should dread that there might come a moment when you were drawing near to middle-age and when looking back at your prime you would say to yourself in sudden regret that it had passed away without the love of a beautiful young woman. You might look back to your lost Rose and remembering what might have been your passionate life with her turn to look at me with hatred—no, not with hatred but with disappointment in your eyes. And from

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the moment I saw that expression I should always be dreading for you the follies which emotionally disappointed men are apt to commit in middle age I could not bear to see you trying to gain from some second-rate love affair with a young woman the emotional contentment which I had failed to give you And there are worse follies for starved middle-aged men than that There are the pitiable erotic adventures which lead to the police-court

But this is really all beside the point, because I have never been under the faintest delusion that I could hold you mine until you were middle-aged! Too many women will love you, and you are too kind, dearest John, to treat them all with a dignified indifference, and much too curious in any case I acquit you of kindness or curiosity in your response to me I tell myself that in a moment of emotional 'emptiness' you found my arms welcome as the sun after the chilling wind which had swept through your blossoms Indeed, I think I'm justified in telling myself that, because otherwise you could not have uttered those words spontaneously

*The warmth of summer when she outsteps June
To lull the blossom of a windswept May*

You spoke the emotional truth then, and why the emotional truth should so often versify itself unconsciously is as much beyond my æsthetic subtlety to guess as it would be for me to attempt a definition of poetry

But even that warmth would have its danger for you should you abandon yourself to it now If the wind of love blow too soon from the south it might enervate a young man And it is best for you to think no more of

love for awhile, or at least of woman's love. Since you have made up your mind to go to the University I think you should go there and enjoy that protracted adolescence of which you and Julius were so scornful, but of which the value was to my mind more judiciously estimated by Emil. I wish with all my heart that Julius could protract his. I think it would be a mistake for you to enter upon your years at Oxford with a sense of difference from your contemporaries because instead of the ordinary last year of school you had spent a year of unusual emotional fullness for a boy. The more commonplace you make your University career—I mean by commonplace the more you enter into the life of the place as one of many students—the finer will be the filter through which your experience hitherto will pass, and I need hardly tell you that if you are to be an artist in any medium experience must pass through a very fine filter indeed, which I need not remind you implies a very slow filter. Academic tranquillity is what you now require. You have already been given a pledge by life that it holds for you infinite variety and absorbing passion. Let that be enough for the present. Ask no more of life for awhile as an extraordinary individual. You can be profoundly excited by life. Let that knowledge suffice and train yourself to use your capacity for being excited by life. Love, religion, art, politics, philosophy, they are all before you. Each one offers you a *grande passion*, but, as Goethe said, '*Ruh kommt aus Unruh, und wieder Unruh aus Ruh*', and you now need a time of rest after unrest that unrest may succeed in its turn. I commend Goethe to you before you let yourself become too much absorbed by Nietzsche. I think no man lived with a purer love of truth, nor any

who sought for it more sanely withal, and sanity is not always a characteristic of searchers for the truth

I doubt if I shall be in London before you go to Oxford. If this house of Julius's materializes I shall have to stay with him for a month or two if only to reassure myself on the subject of the woman we choose for his housekeeper. Emil can look after himself alone at Claremount Gardens for awhile. He told me to-day that he was determined to get up to Oxford next year and I am glad he has made up his mind. Mr Askew and Mr Harvey both wrote and assured me that nothing can stop his getting a scholarship at Balliol. Keep a place in your heart for him, John. I can appreciate what a gulf stretches between the various years, but a year's juniority will not be too much, I hope, for your friendship to continue at Oxford. His friendship for you at school has made an immense difference to him, indeed an overwhelming difference. Between you and me, he has been inclined to be a little jealous of your friendship with Julius. Jealousy is poor Emil's burden. I hope that as he grows older he will lose it. His father was an intensely jealous man, and lacking success as he did he fed upon his jealousy, but I am the fond mother who believes that her elder son will make a real mark in the world in a few years. He has an almost cruel perceptiveness. He guessed that I was in love with you even before I had really admitted as much to my innermost self. And I am wondering now if he has guessed how far the expression of that love was carried.

I am intensely happy, dearest John. You know those amber days of September in England when the sun begins to ride low and the shadows are longer? I bask

now in the mellow warmth of such a breathless September day, and I hold you for ever, John, enshrined in such amber But do not suppose that I intend to tease you with sentimental re-evocations either by word or letter in the future This is the last time I shall allude to those hours when you were my Endymion To me you brought such rapture as oh, but why seek for comparisons? You were yourself and you were in my arms, and in that fact my life has been granted what it lacked

It is time I came to an end of this endless letter I have been writing steadily for over three hours, but I hate to finish, just because it is to be the first and the last letter in which I speak of my love for you, or at any rate of that love for you which was expressed upon that August night in Cracow I don't want you to allude to it at all when you write to me Let me be still your dearest Miriam, but dearest as an older sister is dear I'm glad you have no sisters, John, for if I can fancy myself a wise older sister I shall rob no woman of her privilege Perhaps if I get back to England before term is over you will let me come down for an afternoon to Oxford? I should like to see your rooms and it will give me much authority with Emil However, I shall wait for a really pressing invitation

And now I have no excuse to protract any longer this already intolerably protracted letter I will write again when we have some news of Julius's house The more I think of that ridiculous child in his own house, the more I fancy I am reading some fairy-tale which begins 'once upon a time there lived in a house'

I have just read through what I have written to

you, and how all the glow in my heart, which will beat for you, John, until it beats no longer in this puzzle of a world, seems damped by clumsy words But remember, beloved boy, and that really is the last time I shall write or say those two words, remember that this heart of mine will always beat in sympathy, will always beat for you Do not let a preposition like 'for' mislead you If in the future you will always remember that in confiding in me you confide in your most secret self I shall not know I am growing old When you told me about Rose I fought with myself (I had to fight with myself then) not to allow jealousy to distort my judgment But then we had never heard that trumpeter blow his unfinished tune in Cracow Then I had not given to you what it was seeming I had held within me all my life that it might be given to you

And here is the end of this page I have no room to write more than 'I love you'

Miriam

John read through the dozen sheets of crackling foreign note-paper Then he took his bicycle and rode into the heart of the Buckinghamshire beech-woods, which at this date provided the nearest completely rustic seclusion within reach of London, and spent a day of sylvan meditation

The next morning he went up to Oxford and after making friends with one of the college servants on duty in the lodge he got a glimpse of the rooms that were to be his next term He returned to London in the evening and ensconced himself in his own bedroom to answer Miriam Stern's letter

98 CHURCH ROW,
HAMPSTEAD,
N W

September 5, 1901

If I begin by saying that your letter was exactly what I needed to steady myself it will sound as if I had taken to drink since I left Cracow, but I hope you'll know what I mean, and when I tell you that I spent the day I received your letter in lying under a huge beech-tree (apart from the sixty miles of bicycling involved in getting to the beech-tree and back) and pondering the wisdom of the advice you gave me you will know how important the letter was to me. And when I go on to tell you that to-day I have been up to Oxford with the spirit of your letter over me you will feel still surer of its effect upon my state of mind. All of which information could have been concentrated into the two words 'thank you'

Cracow will be for ever and in every way unforgettable. But so is Fontainebleau, and so for that matter is the first day Emil invited me into Claremount Gardens. You gave me then something I had missed since the death of my mother, and since then you have given me so much that I can't begin to put my obligations down on paper. The only way in which I can try to repay your generosity is to take the fullest advantage of it, and that I will promise to do. And please don't think this is a promise lightly made. At the risk of sounding high-flown I will say that I would rather die than break that promise. And when I write that please read into it my consciousness of so much that I realize you do not want mentioned

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again by me, but do not suppose that it is my own self-consciousness which prevents me from alluding to it. I think I can say without any youthful conceit that I understand the part I was lucky enough to be able to play in your life. I am grateful to your confidence in me, and whatever follies I commit in the future, although since knowing you I shall have less excuse for them, I shall reveal them to you with as much freedom as I hope I shall always know how to admit them to myself. Oh dear, this is all very involved and badly expressed, but I have not yet learnt how to tackle experience in words without becoming stilted. I seem to be back again in the toils of a sonnet.

I'll tell you about my visit to Oxford instead. It was a perfect day. I found a genial fellow in the college lodge who got one of the scouts to take me up to my rooms in Exeter. They are on the second floor in the front quad and look down into Turl Street, a narrow somewhat mediæval looking street, which runs from Broad Street to the famous High. The rooms themselves are tiny. I was told that in my second year I would get bigger ones, but I am rather fascinated by the monk's-cell effect, though the furniture which I shall have to buy from my predecessor on a valuation is beyond words! However, I suppose with one's own pictures and books one will forget about the furniture, which anyway if hideous is comfortable enough. In such rooms academic tranquillity is almost inevitable, and I made the most pious resolutions to devote myself to the school of *Literae Humaniores*. I had been thinking of reading Modern History or English Literature, but I believe I'll stick to the classics through which I have been dragged since I was eight years old.

These last fifteen months of rest from them have given me a notion to return to them. However, perhaps I shall change my mind again. Anyhow, whatever school I read for I'll devote to it some of what my reports at the end of term have referred to as 'my undoubted abilities' and try to achieve from my application to them some of that diligence the lack of which has hitherto distressed a succession of schoolmasters. What you say about the fine filter is true, I'm convinced. And now that I have had a glimpse at life's excitement I do not so much grudge the pedantic grind.

After I had visited my monk's cell in Exeter I wandered round about some of the other colleges, and had a momentary return of discontent with the existing order of things when I walked through Magdalen, New College, Worcester, and an enchanting little place called St Edmund Hall, all of which make Exeter seem a little prosaic, if architecture and lawns and gardens be the criterion. I'm glad Emil is firmly set on coming up next year. I don't think you need worry about his juniority. If I preserve any of the sophistication of a second-year man after I have been ten minutes in his company I shall be extremely surprised. It will be interesting to find if his scorn of the past survives Oxford. Of course I'm a predestined mediævalist and therefore bound to succumb. In fact Oxford coming right on top of Cracow has been altogether too much for me. I'm not going to compete with Matthew Arnold by attempting an impressionist picture of Oxford as it was in the emptiness of an amber day in the Long Vacation. I thought of what you said in your letter about basking in the mellow warmth of such a day, and that is what I did in the gardens of college after

college, and I could say truly 'Ruh kommt aus Unruh'. Yes, I will read more of Goethe. As a matter of fact I have already read the conversations with Eckermann which with the correspondence of Flaubert and Georges Sand have taught me more than any books I have yet read. And I have read *Wilhelm Meister*, but I've not yet tackled *Faust* properly. You know my aspirations after the drama. I found some wonderful wisdom about that in the conversations.

Emil really must not be jealous of my friendship with Julius. It was a friendship which was bound to come as soon as Julius escaped from that brooding dream in which he was living when I first knew you all. And whether Emil likes it or not I am hoping to be invited by Julius to stay with him in his house among the corn-fields. I hope by living with him in intimate surroundings to obtain some insight into the mystery of music.

My stepmother is much better. In a few days I shall be performing the part of godfather to my infant brother. I am caught by the idea of this infant having been born at this moment when I am myself about to begin another stage in my development. I was thinking yesterday that in spite of the several lessons I have had already from life I am just as much of an unknown quantity as that infant, but by the time he is beginning to reach a fairly interesting age I hope I shall have some of the assurance which ought to come from a fresh experience of unrest after my period of rest. My father has been extremely decent since I came home. I'm afraid we shall never be really intimate because the only beliefs he seems to hold with any passion are as meaningless to me as the rubbish one reads, or rather avoids reading, in the

leaders of the Press I've a theory that none of the people who write these leaders and none of the people who read them do really believe them, but only believe that they ought to believe them, which is not quite the same thing In fact this attempt to believe what we ought to believe is to my mind the most obvious proof that we are getting nowhere and that we shall have to have another conflagration of the mind like the French Revolution before we find the road again There surely never was a century like the one from which we have just mercifully escaped for fostering the rapid growth of an intellectual forest of soft-wooded ideas in which humanity could lose itself We must cut and cut away and if necessary burn on a grand scale I suppose the first clearance will be made by a great war War is in the air When I start thinking about the plays I want to write I get a feeling that it's all a waste of energy planning now before the crash comes It's a pity Victoria lived on for that lost decade, and that Franz Josef still lingers If the two of them had vanished from the European scene say in 1890, the big war might have been over by now and we should be clearing up the débris

Write to me as soon as this house is found I shall see Emil before I see you But when you come back to London you'll certainly have to come up to Oxford and I'll give you lunch in my monk's cell The important part of this letter is not what I have written, but what I have not written If only one could write poetry like that what great poets we should all be!

My father offered to stand me the fare back to Cracow so that I might finish my visit to you, but I thought you

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*would rather I stayed where I am, and we are having
the christening party of David in about a fortnight*

With love,

Always your most devoted

John

The christening party had scarcely a hundred yards to walk to the ceremony, but at the last moment Elise Ogilvie herself was dissuaded by her mother from attending. It was the first time John had met Lady Hunter and he was much amused by observing his father's deference to that majestic dame. He was still more amused when Sir William, whom also he was meeting for the first time, said to him *sotto voce*

"My wife has brought your father under the yoke, quelled the nurse, reduced our colleague Mrs Cregeen to the ranks, at any rate for all practical purposes, compelled you and me to talk in whispers, and is now sitting on the clergyman with the determination of a whole bench of bishops. So far so good. The question now is whether she will be able to tame our godson."

At that moment David let out a yell.

"Ha-ha," the grandfather chuckled. "She's defeated Capital!"

Sir William Hunter was a neatly made man whose clean-shaven faintly rosy countenance was etched with innumerable fine wrinkles. His outstanding feature was a pair of extremely light humorous eyes to which the bushy slanting eyebrows still dark in contrast with his white hair

gave a perpetual expression of whimsical but sympathetic astonishment at the follies of mankind, particularly those of his majestic wife

"Have you studied the ceremony which is before us?" he asked of John

"I read it through in the Prayer Book this morning "

"We seem to be—er—assuming a very large responsibility," said Sir William "And—er—committing the infant to a course of life which would empty the law courts if it were widely adopted I think I shall leave the answers to you "

By now the baby had ceased crying and they were all gathered round the font of the ugly little eighteenth-century church which in spite of its ugliness had such a curious charm, such a redolence of former leisure, such a fragrant intimacy with the past

Mrs Cregeen exquisitely corseted, gowned in mauve crêpe-de-Chine and wearing a large chip hat heavily trimmed with sprays of lilac, fluttered her violet-blue eyes at the judge

"I am relying on you, Sir William, you know," she murmured archly

"But you are not being christened, my dear Mrs Cregeen "

"Now you are not to make fun That's really very naughty of you Suppose we all made fun when you were sitting on the bench in your robes?"

"I should know how to deal with you "

"Hush, hush!" came reprovingly from Lady Hunter

"Mr Morrison is quite ready to begin "

The preliminary prayers were given out with all the unction which the sonorous sixteenth-century English

invites and presently the officiating clergyman was saying

“I demand therefore

“Dost thou, in the name of this Child, renounce the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?”

There was a momentary silence. Then John felt himself being prodded in the ribs by Sir William, and hastily gulped

“I renounce them all ”

A minute or two later he had pledged himself on behalf of his infant brother to a steadfast belief in the articles of the Apostles' Creed, to a desire to be baptized in that faith, and to a promise obediently to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life

“Bravo,” Sir William whispered, when the officiating clergyman had started more prayers “I'll name the child, partner, I feel I can do that with impunity ”

When the water from the font was sprinkled upon David he let out a yell and continued to yell with increasing vigour while the officiating clergyman assured his dearly beloved brethren that this Child was regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church

“One ventures to hope that those yells are affirmative,” observed Sir William to his fellow-sponsor, “in spite of their somewhat negative suggestion ”

When the christening party had left the church the judge put his arm through John's and drew him aside to admire the view of London from the southward slope of the graveyard

"We will give the others time to reach the house and follow them at our leisure," he announced "I wonder why Elise selected that agreeable but empty-headed woman to be the godmother of our godson As a colleague she does not strike me as being adequate for the position from any standpoint "

"I think she's very rich," said John

"Ah, you impute to Elise's worldliness her choice of a worldling You are probably right A rich childless widow yes, perhaps the choice was not such a bad one Yet she may marry again She is good-looking, well turned out, and has I am given to understand not a penny less than £8000 a year of an income I cannot believe she will remain a lonely widow much longer A charming survival, this churchyard," he continued, looking round him, "we might be in Stoke Poges itself 'Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep' Tell me, does Gray's *Elegy* impress the younger generation of to-day? I suppose not "

"It has always impressed me, sir, in spite of having had to turn it into Latin elegiacs "

"You don't find it mere rhetoric? The poetry of one period so easily becomes the rhetoric of the next

"For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

"I expect you prefer

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be

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That no life lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea "

"I do like Swinburne very much, but I don't feel sure that I shall always like his poetry," replied John

"Rhetoric, rhetoric too But I think it would be fair to say that no poet has moralized on death without being discovered at last as a rhetorician Not even Shakespeare And the musician is hardly more successful I noticed that particularly at the old Queen's funeral Handel's Dead March with all the emotional help that use and familiarity could give it had a singular emptiness It seemed as conventional an expression of grief as a crape-hung hatchment over the portals of a house in Belgravia And Chopin's Funeral March was hardly more than a tear-bedewed lace handkerchief at a Brookwood graveside I did not hear if they played Beethoven's funeral march from the *Eroica*, but even that grows as prosy as a panegyric for some dead French Academician Wagner comes nearer in *Siegfried* to a statement of elemental mortality, but it is such an emphatic statement, too emphatic for the average mortal on his last journey "

"I know the first two marches you mentioned, sir, but I don't know the Beethoven march, and the only opera of Wagner's I've heard is *Tristan* "

"Is that so? I wonder how his music will survive during the next thirty years I gain from it a most exciting contact with the fever of youth It is the ambition of most judges to forget their position provided they can do so with dignity or at least without scandal I escape from it by the help of Wagner's music Yes," Sir William went

on, gazing in turn at the eighteenth-century church with its squat tower and steeple rising unusually from the east end, at the huddle of tombstones in a small wilderness of flowers and grass, and at the outspread golden haze of London stretching wide below them, "yes, this is a delightful spot I hope that it will not have to be swept away for an orgy of building And you are eighteen, eh?"

"Nineteen at the beginning of October," John added quickly

"Just fifty years between us And yet, you know, I call myself an old man merely in self-defence in order that others may at once contradict me I do not in my heart consider myself an old man Between ourselves, I fancy that Elise had a notion to flatter her father when she invited him to share with a young man like yourself the spiritual responsibilities we jointly undertook just now Forgive the essential impertinence of the question I am going to ask and do not hesitate to ignore it if you do not wish to gratify my curiosity, but could you have answered with equal self-assurance those questions we were asked by the parson if you had not been pledging an infant?"

"Do you mean do I really believe the Apostles' Creed?"

Sir William nodded

"I'm glad you did ask me that, sir, because on one or two occasions I have asked older people if they really believed something, and I have noticed that they always seemed to resent such a question Well, I can only reply that I don't know I don't even know if I believe that I believe or if I believe that I don't believe I'm afraid that

sounds a little involved. Until last month I could not have told you whether I had any positive belief in a spiritual reality behind the world of our senses, but a conviction of that was suddenly forced upon me in what seemed—well, indeed it *was* a moment of illumination, and after that experience I shall never be able to possess any security of unbelief again. I hope that by the light of that momentary flash I shall discover the particular truths of the religion which is the truth. And now may I ask you something, sir?”

“Ask away by all means.”

“When you are sitting in judgment do you really believe that the laws you administer are always good laws?”

“By good laws do you mean useful laws?”

“No, no,” said John eagerly. “I mean laws which never contravene the truth of this universe, or I would rather say the truth of God revealing Himself in this universe, or perhaps it would be nearer to my meaning if I said ‘this life’ in which you and I are at the moment sitting among the tombs of a Hampstead churchyard.”

The judge pondered awhile before replying.

“Yes,” he said at length, “I think I can honestly declare that I believe in the goodness of the law, though I will admit that I have been several times aware of desiring to change the law to suit a particular occasion. After all, the law as the sum of human experience up to now carries a good deal of weight.”

“But legal systems vary. Do you always feel sure that English law is the best?”

“For England, certainly.”

“Do you never have a doubt whether the unhappiness and actual want of so high a proportion of the people in

England and indeed everywhere in Europe may not be a reflection on the law?"

"No, not upon the law, because the law never outsteps the potentiality of man for good. The law follows. It does not lead. When it leads the state is in danger."

"Yes, we once had an essay more or less on that 'Corruptissima republica plurimae leges' from Tacitus was the theme."

"And what did you argue?"

"I argued that in an ideal state laws would be unnecessary and that every new law added to our present ones was an impediment in the way of that ideal state. I am beginning to think with a conviction growing stronger all the time that we are approaching very near to the necessity for destroying the social system of which our legal system is an expression. Don't you ever say to yourself, sir, that there must be something wrong at a period like this, when there is more than enough to feed and clothe and house every man, woman, and child in the country, if at least four-fifths of the population live in perpetual anxiety about the future? And do you never suspect, sir, that the thrift which in your official capacity you are bound to uphold as a virtue may be not merely not a virtue, but even, if judged by its practical value for that anxious four-fifths of the population, a deadly sin?"

"Thrift a sin, eh? Well, well, well, is that what young people are going to start promulgating?"

"What I mean is that if you make a man save his money in order to guard himself against a miserable old age you are encouraging the accumulation of money and inviting usury under the euphemism of interest, the result of which must be ultimately to cripple the sane development

of the country by concentrating money in the hands of the few It's presumptuous of me, sir, to talk like this, I know, but you asked me what I believed, and the most fervid belief I have at the moment is in the social injustice of civilization in its present stage I hate imperialism, but I am not clear yet whether I would smash imperialism by trying to rebuild the world on a scale of smaller national unities or by cutting the ground away underneath by destroying capitalism "

"But destruction of some kind, more or less violent, is to be the order of the day? You are positive on that point?"

"I think it must be The French Revolution degenerated into the Second Empire and is now almost invisible in the Third Republic The Reform Act was overlaid by the heavy body of Victorianism The Franco-Prussian War bred this gimcrack German Empire of to-day Austria has been decaying since 1866 I believe that salvation will come to mankind from Russia "

"From Russia? How do you descry that upon the horizon?"

"Have you read any of Dostoevsky's novels, sir?"

"Yes, I read a book called *Crime and Punishment* Remarkable in its way, but too morbid to count as great literature "

"You never read *The Idiot*? I came across it this summer in a cheap translation published by Vizitelly It's the first book I ever read which seemed to me to bring Christ into relation with the world of to-day And then I got hold of a French translation of another of his novels—*Les Frères Karamazov*, which is really a stupendous work I'm boring you, sir?"

Sir William had turned away for a moment to look along Church Row

"You're not boring me at all, but I was thinking that we two godfathers ought to be showing ourselves at the post-baptismal festivities. But finish what you were telling me as we stroll back."

"When I'd thought about these two books of Dostoevsky," John continued, "it was somehow borne in on my mind that Christianity might be entering upon its third and final phase. I was thinking that it began with Petrine Christianity which gave way at the Reformation to Pauline Christianity, and now it seems to me that the mission of Pauline Christianity is finished and that mankind must pass on to Johannine Christianity which I believe will come from Russia, but of course not until the Russian Empire is overthrown by the Russian people."

"Look here, we can't dig into this matter with other obligations hanging over us," said the judge. "But I have to be in town for a couple of days. Come and dine with me to-night at a chop-house I have frequented since I was a student at the Inner Temple, not so far from fifty years ago. We will have a bottle of Mouton-Rothschild and some '33 brandy just a year younger than myself. Old Niblett died some twenty years back, and his son has been good enough to take my advice from time to time about his cellar."

At this date chop-houses like Niblett's did not make their frequenters feel that they were eating in a showman's booth. The whiskered English waiters, the spittoons and the sawdust, the wooden seats with straight backs polished by long usage, and the carelessly scribbled bill of fare or ordinary of the day did not suggest a self-conscious gather-

ing of the Dickens Fellowship People ate at such places because the food was English, good, and cheap, and in the case of Niblett's some went there for the wine too, and not so much for the Bristol Cream or Fine Old Crusted as for the choice claret, because even by 1901 the number of eating-houses in London where the customer could rely upon a good bottle of claret was small

John had called for his host at the Reform Club and while waiting for him in the sombre atrium kept between his fingers the cigarette he had been smoking on his way along Pall Mall

"Excuse me, sir," a lugubrious voice murmured in his ear "No smoking is allowed in this portion of the Club "

John blushed at the rebuke and was looking for some receptacle for the offending cigarette, which was not even a plump Turkish Sullivan or Bateman, but a slim Guinea Gold Virginian, when his host came to the rescue

"That's all right, Wood My guest and I are going out immediately "

"Very good, Sir William," replied the club servant with a deference which in spite of its profundity managed to suggest a faint surprise at the levity of the judge's announcement and the kind of company he kept

"It was my fault, my dear boy I should have warned you against our antediluvian habits We cherish the prohibition against smoking anywhere except in the rooms licensed for the pastime A few of the senior members—I am sometimes among them—will occasionally venture to carry a lighted cigar under their coats quickly through the hall and thus escape the disapproval in Wood's ancient and severe eye, but that is the limit of our profanity In

spite of our name Reform our radicalism is no longer perceptible Indeed, a faint murmur of relief when a conservative victory goes up on the board at a general election is the only sign that we take any interest in contemporary life at all Hansom! Jump in, my dear boy Niblett's Chop-house," Sir William told the driver as he followed John into the cab

"Let me see, sir, that's "

"In the Strand opposite Appenrodt's," said Sir William sharply

"I know, sir," said the cabby without a sign of being ashamed of his hesitation, and in fact with a grin and a wink

"A sad commentary on London life to-day, that in order to direct a London cabman to a chop-house established for nigh on a century I have to guide him to it by way of a modern German *delicatessen* shop "

It was half-past seven when the hansom pulled up before a narrow bow-windowed house squeezed between an outfitter's and a jeweller's A moment later Sir William and his guest had passed through into Niblett's Chop-house with its mingled odour of wine, sawdust, and grilling meat The proprietor, a prodigiously fat man in shirtsleeves and an apron, came forward to greet the judge

"Good evening, Sir William," he wheezed "I had your message Everything is ready I've got you the finest piece of rump steak I've seen this year Beautiful!

You're going to enjoy it, Sir William And I've laid for you in the little room upstairs, as you had a guest "

The fat man who was extremely active for his size led the way up a narrow staircase and opened the door of a small panelled room, the walls hung with sporting prints of which a particularly good impression of *The Melton Hunt Breakfast* was the show picture Most of the space was occupied by a mahogany table and solid mahogany chairs with leather seats In the centre of the table was a big Lowestoft bowl crammed with double dahlias of every colour

"My married daughter sent those up this morning from Saffron Walden," observed Mr Niblett "And now, Sir William, will you do me the honour of drinking a glass of sherry with me? And you, sir?" he added, turning to John

"This is my step-grandson-in-law, Niblett," said Sir William

Mr Niblett rubbed the back of his head to suggest a courteous perplexity

"Wait a moment now, Sir William, that's a new relationship to me, that is "

"I'll say my daughter's stepson "

"What it is to be one of Her Majesty's His Majesty's Judges, I should say everything stated as clear as gin Now, Sir William, I'd very much like your opinion of that sherry A little a leetle too sweet? yes, dash it, I knew you'd think that Still it has a nice round body "

"Oh, it's a capital wine, Niblett," the judge allowed "But not superlative I find a tendency nowadays to accept sherries with too easy an enthusiasm "

It was after they had finished with a steak which justified all the host had claimed for it, with the Welsh rarebit for which the house was famous, and with a basket of peaches specially picked out at Covent Garden, and after Sir William had sipped his brandy for a while in meditative silence that he poured himself out another glass and turning to his guest invited him to take up the conversation in the churchyard which had been interrupted that afternoon by the claims of the christening party

"Your suggestion about a new phase of Christianity coming from Russia and your theory about the two preceding phases struck me. Shall we examine the theory more closely? I take it that by Petrine Christianity you mean the formative institutional process dependent for its success upon the ability of the Church of Rome to take the fullest advantage of the favour of Constantine?"

"Yes, sir, and the development of that progress through the Middle Ages"

"And you think that Christianity underwent a radical change at the Reformation? You don't regard it as the restoration of a religion nearer to the spirit of its Founder?"

"Well, that's the Evangelicals' claim, but I can't find any grounds for it in the Gospels themselves. It seems to me that Calvinists and Lutherans and the rest of them rely almost entirely on their interpretation of the epistles of St Paul. And I think St Paul missed the advantage of an occasional snub from the mouth of Christ Himself. And it seems to me that Protestant theology was essentially an attempt to counter the supposed destruction of the Church's authority by the New Learning by substituting for that authority the

assurance of a personal faith in Christ the Redeemer And then, as it seems to me, this personal faith has gradually grown weaker for various reasons but chiefly through an advance of material knowledge coinciding with the burning out of individual fervour It was when I read this Russian writer's books that I became aware of the kindling of a fresh fire It was rather rash of me to say what I did to you, because I haven't the historical knowledge to support my theory, and so I have to fall back on intuition, which is not very satisfactory While I was reading Dostoevsky I was conscious of a kind of excitement as if I were all the time on the verge of some tremendous discovery, as if truth were near at hand and that at any moment I should come face to face with it I have the same feeling sometimes when, waking abruptly from deep sleep, I try to recapture the dream I have just left And even some time after such a sleep, perhaps several days later, a remark will be made and I will have the conviction that the true answer or comment was in my mind during some dream But I'm afraid I'm talking too much, sir "

"No, no," said the older man, "but I want to get back to this Russian notion of yours Let us assume for a moment that your intuition is correct and that what we will call the preparation of a third phase of the Christian revelation is at this moment discernible in Russia Do you suppose that this will be compatible with the endurance of the great political system to which we both adhere?"

"You mean the prestige and dominance of the British Empire?"

"Precisely In terms of the Christian revelation, which

for the sake of this discussion we are accepting as the truth of God, the endurance of the British Empire depends on the validity, efficacy, and sufficiency of the British imperial idea. I note with what I confess is some disquiet that the younger generation is "beginning to question all three qualities. I recognize that there may be a temporary reaction due to the disillusionment brought about by the feeble conduct of the war in South Africa, but that such a reaction can so easily be established appears to me ominous. Am I pressing you to answer too large a question when I ask you to tell me what it is which causes you young people to take up this extremely critical attitude toward an institution which has seemed to the previous generation impregnable?"

"It is a large question, sir," John replied. "And if I try to answer it from my personal opinions they will probably strike you as too eccentric to be worth consideration."

"Revolutions begin when a number of eccentric opinions discover for themselves a common centre, even if such a common centre be nothing more intellectually substantial than dissatisfaction with what is. So let me have some of your eccentric opinions."

John hesitated. It was one thing to babble on with Emil or Fitz, but another thing altogether to babble on under the bright eyes and slightly astonished eyebrows of a Lord Justice of the Court of Appeal.

"But, sir, you'll think I'm talking rot."

"That's very probable," Sir William agreed. "But if I disagree with you, although you will grant me the courtesy of appearing to listen with deference, you will think I'm thinking 'rot' as you tersely describe it. Old men may be

divided roughly into two classes. There are those who at seventy wish to spend the few years left to them in retrospective contemplation and console themselves for their imminent exit from the stage of this mortal life by reflecting that the play about to be produced is in every way inferior to that in which they have acted their parts, and there are those who at seventy are tormented by an insatiable curiosity about the play of which they will not be even spectators. The second class is a small minority. Goethe belonged to it. So do I. And now, come, you have practically admitted to me your belief in the passing of the British Empire. You owe my curiosity the gratification of indicating why."

"Well, I suppose in the first place all empires pass."

"*Tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe*, as the French proverb has it. But that's no opinion for youth to hold *a priori*. Moreover, it does not take into account the extraordinary adaptability of the British race. The lesson learnt over the American colonies will not be so easily forgotten."

"I should have thought the treatment of Ireland during the nineteenth century showed that it had been almost ignored. In fact the fundamental weakness of the British Empire may be its failure to realize its lack of racial homogeneity and consequently its over-confidence in an instinctive unity at every moment of crisis."

"If we may judge by the answer which the Colonies gave to the South African crisis surely we are entitled to feel the profoundest confidence in such unity?"

"There must be an adventurous element in every people, sir. I would not attach a great deal of imperial importance, for instance, to the City Imperial Volunteers

or the Imperial Yeomanry I wanted to enlist in the Yeomanry myself, and I think my reason was about the same as that of most—boredom with the humdrum of school in my case, of office work in the case of others. But I think, sir, if I may say so, that any discussion of the significance of the volunteer help from home or the Colonies during this war is rather beside the point. I'm not suggesting and I don't know any contemporaries of mine who do suggest, that the British Empire is going to pieces before our eyes. And I don't believe that it will ever go to pieces in war. Indeed, war is likely to weld it more firmly than before unless war changes its character completely, which of course is always possible while scientific invention continues at the pace it is going. It seems to me that the decline of the British Empire if it should come will come with the decline of its own spiritual ideals and its inability to stand against other ideals or, in spite of what you say about its adaptability, to remain itself and absorb fresh spiritual ideas from without."

"But these spiritual ideals of the British Empire," the judge protested. "Surely you do not claim any self-conscious mission for the British imperial idea? I should have thought that like the Roman imperial idea it was an application to the rest of the world of what was implied by the words *civis Romanus*. I should have said that the Englishman took his imperial mission as much for granted as his own behaviour."

"But, sir, I should have thought that there was a definite conception of an imperium dating from the reign of Elizabeth, and if that can be discerned we must admit that it was not a British imperium, using the silly word British to represent the amalgamation of England,

Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall, but an English imperium begotten by Elizabeth and Burghley and expressing the peculiar genius of the English people. I can't help thinking that there would not have been so much insistence on the headship of the Church of England if there had not been a direct intention to support material advance with spiritual authority. Well, then came the Stuarts who never felt quite sure that they were English monarchs and who in order to impose themselves upon the English invented the doctrine of the divine right of kings. The first two of them were logical enough to see that there was something spiritually wrong with an Anglican king in England who was a Presbyterian king in Scotland, and it seems to me that when the English cut off the head of Charles I they cut away the spiritual foundation on which Elizabeth and Burghley had built up the English imperial idea, which was after all founded upon the expected destruction of the Church of Rome to whose spiritual domination the Anglican Church must have hoped to succeed, with a layman as indubitable head and a pack of lawyers elaborating their own craft in place of the priestcraft for having destroyed which men were patting themselves on the back."

"You are severe on lawyers," said the judge, when John paused breathless, "yet they are the main props of a stable society."

"Well, sir, I must be frank and tell you that I really hate the tyranny of lawyers. I can only see them as the villains of the piece ever since the sixteenth century. And I think the most damaging criticism one can level against the Established Church is the way it truckles to lawyers."

"As when for instance? "

"I won't say directly to lawyers, but to the authority to the maintenance of which the law is directed I suppose you could take the Litany in the Book of Common Prayer as the most complete exposition of the express beliefs of the Church of England. And the effect is that God's second choice among peoples is praying to be protected, encouraged, and rewarded for being His recently chosen people and that the most important boon He can grant His people is to look after the King, the Royal Family, the Lords of the Council, the Nobility, and the Magistrates. I'm not setting out to criticize that attitude of mind by suggesting that it offers a pretty thin gruel in the way of spiritual nourishment, but what I must point out is that by cutting off the head of Charles I the English denied a fundamental principle of their religion. No wonder the later Stuarts remained Roman Catholics, but with a somewhat clumsy logic clung to the doctrine of the divine right of kings.

"Well, that was shattered by the Revolution and finally buried out of sight by the Hanoverian succession. Your English adaptability, sir, contrived to swallow an arrangement by which a king without divine right was nevertheless head of the Anglican Church, and the spiritual idea behind that State Church developed from being the supreme expression of the second phase of Christianity into being the supreme expression of that cultural ideal which we imply with the word 'gentleman', in fact the *civis Romanus* in another guise. Then 'gentleman' came to be used as a distinguishing title for somebody of a certain social eminence and material independence, and I doubt if in another fifty years the word 'gentle-

man' will be anything except a derogatory term for a drone

"Now my theory is that by failing to assimilate the spiritual and social ideals of the other nations which helped them to create the British Empire and by imposing upon them instead purely English ideals and standards the English have failed to produce an indestructible political entity That being so there must be thousands of British subjects who feel a doubt about the future and who are torn between their loyalty to a traditional patriotism and their belief in new social ideals You asked me, sir, what the young men of the moment were feeling about the Empire If I may judge by my friends, I would say that the people of my age are beginning to realize that the British Empire is merely a commercial concern which under the appearance of an altruistic morality exploits weaker nations We feel that the other so-called empires are no better, and for that reason we do not consider ourselves unpatriotic by criticizing, but I think most of us do not feel perfectly sure that if some other nation produced a social ideal which would benefit the whole of the human race we should greatly regret the discrediting of the British imperial idea We have been sickened by the mush of a Rudyard Kipling We cannot see in what is proclaimed to be the spiritual voice of the British Empire at the peak of its renown and power anything better than a catchpenny jangle of words We feel that the white man's burden is a bundle of humbug when we remember the poor of this rich land We hate the despicable party politicians who play an elaborate game for their own careers We resent the signs we see of enslaving still further the individual

for the sake of the smoothness of the commercial machine We believe that the Victorian age from start to finish was a betrayal of the century which passed the Reform Act, and we denounce this cynical South African war as the ultimate outrage of Victorianism ” ,

“And how is the new age 'going to attack these enormities?” Sir William asked

“Yes, I'm afraid I have been rather incoherent And I'm afraid we haven't yet discovered the passionate faith which will make us forget our discontent in the pursuit of some positive clearly defined goal I have a friend, an Irishman, who has a passionate faith in the possible freedom of Ireland I should like to have an equally passionate faith in the possible freedom of Scotland ”

“Forgive me,” Sir William interposed, “but what exactly do you mean by freedom in this connection?”

“Separation from the British Empire in order to live its own national life without what are called imperial obligations, which may mean such obligations as we have recently undertaken in Africa to destroy the independence of two small states, as we undertook in Egypt, and I would add India too ”

“I think your Irish friend has set himself a hard test of faith, and I might remind you that these two small states whose destruction you lament had not hesitated to destroy the aboriginal owners of their country But do not stop to argue with me Let us reach your conclusion ”

“Another friend of mine has an equally passionate faith in the possible destruction of capitalism and the achievement of perpetual international peace ”

"Humph! I must say your young friends are full of enterprise Does that last ideal attract you?"

"Yes, it does, but it would attract me more if it were based on an attempt to put into effect the third phase of Christianity of which I have this intuition And I'm afraid I must add that the reason for this is egotistical, because I cannot definitely believe and I cannot definitely not believe in the Christian religion, and if some new furnace of Christianity blazed up I should be able to get rid for ever of that gnawing doubt of its historical truth "

"And by that you mean?"

"That everything happened as we read of its happening in the Bible A pragmatic truth isn't enough for my mental comfort "

"I haven't read those books of Dostoevsky which have filled you with such an *ardor vitae*, but I don't quite see how the illustration of them by some national awakening would prove the historical truth of the Christian religion A faith which has lasted nineteen hundred years must be granted a pragmatic value and so perhaps a pragmatic truth which renders it independent of historical truth And I don't see how you are going to establish whether this expected national awakening in Russia is inspired by pragmatic or historic Christianity As I see it from an old man's standpoint the desire to believe in an historic Christianity is the assurance it would give the individual of a self-conscious immortality And that belief I venture to think will not be affected by the manner of life in this world inculcated by your prophet Dostoevsky

"I think we may take it as certain that if humanity, or let us qualify by saying Western humanity, were

convinced to a man of personal immortality its conduct in this world would be very different from what it is. And there is no doubt that most of us feel a slight grievance against God for not making it certain that we *are* immortal—certain I mean in, the circumstantial way we appreciate certainty on the Bench. Yet as I grow old I begin to apprehend the wisdom of God in withholding such circumstantial proof, assuming of course that there is a God and that we are immortal. I apprehend that without this doubt man's life in this world would be an extraordinarily dull business. In fact it wouldn't in our conception of the word be life at all. On the other hand if eternal oblivion is the goal of death it is difficult to account for this strange and indeed on the face of it this preposterous belief in immortality. And in implanting this doubt agnostics might have to recognize as profound a wisdom in Nature as in God.

“However, that digression on immortality is by the way. What I wanted to observe was that the British imperial idea has evolved what I would claim to be the most workable system yet evolved of a pragmatic Christianity. It has moved forward on the whole with a caution and a conservatism that the Church of Rome itself might admire. Throughout the progress of this Empire to the position it occupies to-day the motto has been ‘slow but sure’, and in spite of the disgust which the younger generation appears to be taking to the imperial idea, I venture to express my belief that the British Empire is only now beginning to achieve a condition of completeness which will enable it to carry out its historical mission in the development of this world of ours. And what have you really against it? You are irritated by the vulgarities

of jingo sentiment You think that Rudyard Kipling should be twanging the old-fashioned lyre instead of blowing a trombone But that is all superficial prejudice No empire has achieved its expansion so much to the advantage of the smaller nations it has incorporated ”

“But I object to all imperialism, sir A country is conquered and annexed because it stands in the way of imperial development Capital is then invested in it by the conquerors, and when the exploited nation demands its freedom that freedom is refused because it would mean a loss of capital ”

“You misled me a little by that dissertation on the divine right of kings I begin to see that the real attack is on capitalism of which imperialism is the chief prop, eh ?”

“I told you that my opinions were eccentric, sir I was trying to find a root cause for the failure of British imperialism to make any notable contribution to the things which are not Cæsar’s, and I was wondering if I had found it in the early abandonment of the principle on which it was founded and of the claims it then put forward ”

“I should say on the other hand that the transference of sovereignty to the people was magnificently carried through by the English at the least possible cost in suffering to the majority That by itself strikes me as a justification for ever of British imperialism We had a queen who was, and we now have a king who is the visible incarnation of his people We need not concern ourselves with a passing theory like divine right *Vox populi habet aliquid divinum*, as Bacon said, and Bacon forms with Burghley, Elizabeth, and Shakespeare the square corner-stone on which our England of to-day is built ”

"But, sir, I must argue that the people whose voice is divine means the people with enough money to give them a stake in the country. You asked me to talk to you as one of the younger generation, and I can assure you that by whatever chain of reasoning we achieve our opinion there is no doubt that we all feel the social injustice which refuses to share equitably the riches of a world growing materially richer every day."

"Young people have always thought so about the distribution of wealth. Thackeray has a delightful couple of pages on that subject in *Pendennis* when his hero is at the University. Even that respectable old gentleman Browning of whom I used to see a great deal during his last years wrote 'Just for a handful of silver he left us' when Wordsworth once a revolutionary became Poet Laureate, and poor Swinburne's latest effusions have Kipling fairly kippled. Still, that doesn't prevent the hard fact of revolution, you will tell me, and I have no doubt this century will see many a revolution before it wears to an end. We have not considered the possibility of a great European war. I don't see how that will be averted for many more years. So if I were you I should make the most of your time at Oxford and the most of your time in the years immediately after you go down. I smell change in the air."

The judge pointed to the coloured print of *The Melton Hunt Breakfast* on the panelled wall of the little room.

"That gathering of lords and baronets and squires so secure of the privileges of their class and the permanence of their order will appear as fantastic an illustration of social habits as the Bayeux tapestry before this century is out. Indeed, long before you are my age you may be

looking back even to this dinner of ours as to a feast in the *Odyssey*. So make the most of these years. I could not help smiling to myself at what you were promising on behalf of that young brother of yours. His grandfather could not bring himself to do as much. Come along, we'll take a turn in the Temple and walk off the effect of Niblett's Welsh rarebit."

It was just after half-past nine. At this hour when the business of the day was long finished and the theatres had absorbed the seekers after amusement the Strand seemed empty, and they walked along at a good pace eastward. Yet, when they turned aside to enter the Temple and the rolling of the omnibuses was suddenly hushed as the sea is hushed by an interposed cliff, the silence of the Temple made John realize how illusory the emptiness of the Strand had been.

They paced for a while the court above the gardens, offering a tribute as it were to the tranquillity of the surroundings by their abstention from conversation. The trees were motionless, but the air had a faint chill which breathed a whisper of autumn's swift approach, and here and there the sound of a quick footfall of somebody hurrying back to his chambers said that time was passing.

"You must forgive an old man for having abused his hospitality by luring you into talking so much, my dear boy. And the way you will forgive me is by refusing to reproach yourself for having talked too much when we have bid each other a good night."

"I'm afraid I've talked a lot of nonsense."

"In one way, yes, but there is a kind of nonsense which has its value. I didn't want to argue with you, I

wanted, in the vampirish way of old men, or at any rate of some old men, to enjoy your youth, which gave just an added bloom to the Mouton-Rothschild and made it perfect. So don't reproach yourself, because I enjoyed your nonsense. In my position I have to listen to so much carefully considered opinion, to so much studied exposition, that the sound of disjointed formless ideas tumbling over one another can be immensely refreshing. So pray give me the pleasure of supposing that you enjoyed our little dinner as much as I did myself, and if your indictment of the British Empire leaves me an unabashed administrator of its justice, do not attribute such obstinacy to the failure of your eloquence. I am famous for the difficulty I experience in being convinced. Counsel hate my obstinacy. And now let me commend to you the charm of this essentially English product."

Sir William waved his arm slowly round him to call his guest's attention to the Temple scene.

"You will no doubt say to yourself that the sentimentality of an old dodderer over architecture is an inadequate defence of that mighty institution you condemn. But surely you cannot resist the charm of it, and I urge at any rate a temporary surrender to that charm, which you will find in much greater perfection at Oxford. It will do your principles as you will call them, your prejudices as I should call them, no hurt if you do surrender to this mellowness for a while. Forget the fever of the present and learn something from the fever of the past. Man's temperature was always a little above normal. I believe that a first in your final schools—by the way what are you reading?"

"Greats."

"Capital! I am already relieved As I was going to say, I believe that a first is vital only to a schoolmaster, but you will enjoy the satisfaction of a first in Literae Humaniores for the rest of your life, even if you do turn into a Marat or a Robespierre I still enjoy my own first in Greats And why not follow up that first in Greats with a first in Modern History, and that with a fellowship at All Souls, which is worth while if only for the enjoyment of the Warden's conversation? Hullo, ten is striking! I'm off to my bed You'd better go out by Middle Temple Lane These quiet September nights are tempting to those of us who are beginning to count the summers before us We'll dine together again soon And don't discourage my son-in-law from his parliamentary career He'll have a good chance of being Solicitor-General Good night"

Sir William chuckled to himself, and a moment or two later his own quick footfall was saying like the rest that time was on its way

When John left the Temple he started to make his way northward through the wilderness of shattered houses and obliterated streets and alleys which marked the progress of the London County Council's ambitious scheme to provide that thoroughfare between Holborn and the Strand familiar now as Kingsway, which was to solve the problem of London traffic In spite of his host's parting injunction not to reproach himself with having talked too much he could not refrain from doing so It

was a mistake to dine out and suppose that wine and brandy could be drunk without letting the tongue run away with itself. It was wine and brandy which had possessed him when he embarked on that attempt to put into words his theory of the three phases of Christianity, to sustain which he lacked at present the knowledge. That kind of illumination which appeared so bright when it flashed first upon the mind was like striking a sulphur-tipped match to light up Westminster Abbey or the Houses of Parliament or the Law Courts. Fatuous! Another twenty years of reading, another twenty years of experience, another twenty years of meditation were required to test such a theory. He had made a complete fool of himself this evening. What he should have done was to sip the claret and the brandy and draw Sir William out to talk instead of chattering away to him like a gushing schoolgirl who had just passed the London Matriculation. It was all very well for the old boy to reassure him, but if he had not made an ass of himself the old boy would never have bothered to reassure him like that. The most stupid move in the argument had been in using at second hand Emil's theory about capitalism. After all, he was not near to being convinced himself yet that capitalism was the root of the evil. It was a good thing the old boy had not pressed him hard there. He would soon have been floundering. That advice at the end had been neatly given. What it amounted to was that in Sir William's eyes he was an ignoramus, but an ignoramus with brains and that if he made use of those brains he might hope to get somewhere one day. In effect it was the same advice as Miriam had given him.

John had reached Tottenham Court Road and had

paused on the pavement at the corner to make up his mind whether he should board an omnibus or stand himself the luxury of a hansom as far as Swiss Cottage when he heard a voice behind him offer a penny for his thoughts and, looking round he saw the little woman who had come to his rescue in Geneva last year

"Good lord, it's you!" he exclaimed

She drew back in obvious alarm at being recognized
Then she recognized him

"Why, it's Johnnie! My word, you did make me feel funny when you said 'it's you'!"

"But I thought you knew it was me!"

"Did you?"

The tone in which she asked the question struck him as strange. He noticed that her cheeks were heavily rouged and that the dress she was wearing had too summery a look for this September night in which the chill of autumn could be felt. She had the air of a flower which has outlived its season, pinched already and likely soon to droop in ignominious solitude among more robust plants.

"Let's go somewhere and talk. Would you like supper or something?"

"I'd like a cup of coffee."

He looked in the direction of the Horseshoe tavern, but she shook her head, and as she did so he noticed that her white straw hat decked with red roses flopped awkwardly. The hat like herself was a pathetic survival of midsummer.

"No, not in a great noisy place like that, Johnnie. Let's go to some quiet place."

They walked on up Tottenham Court Road, but did

not find any suitable place, and in the end a choice had to be made between the clatter of a fish and chip shop and the saloon bar of a dreary-looking public-house. They decided on the saloon bar.

"I doubt if they'll have any coffee here fit to drink," said John when they were seated on chairs covered with stained and faded crimson plush at a round mahogany table the pedestal of which was heavily and hideously ornate with unnatural fruits.

"Oh well, it doesn't matter, I'll have a whisky hot with lemon. It's quite chilly to-night."

"You ought to have a coat on," said John severely.

"Ought I? Oh well, uncle doesn't think so."

"Your uncle?" he repeated in astonishment.

"Aren't you an innocent? The pawnbroker, silly?"

"Oh, I'm sorry! You've had to pawn your coat."

Look here, I wish you had let me take you somewhere for a proper supper. You can only get ham sandwiches here apparently."

The little woman nodded.

"Yes, I see myself going out to supper with you, looking like something which had been forgotten at the bottom of the clothes-basket last week. But I will have a sandwich. Walking about at night does make anyone feel a bit hungry."

"Why are you walking about at night, Cissie?"

"I'm not doing it for my figure, that's a sure thing. Go on, what's the use in asking questions like that, Johnnie? You may be innocent, but you're not as innocent as all that."

"You're not" he hesitated.

"Yes, I'm on the game. Don't look so shocked."

He hid his confusion by getting up and walking across to the bar to fetch Cissie's hot whisky and the sandwiches. He had not had any real doubt about the state of affairs. Nevertheless to hear it proclaimed like that had left him without any comment which would not sound inane.

"Here, aren't you going to drink anything?" she asked when he came back to the table.

"I forgot. I'll have a Bass."

He returned to the bar. While the barmaid was pouring out the Bass he looked from her to Cissie. She was one of those creatures now seeming as mythical as the Sirens, who miraculously squeezed their abundant shapes into hour-glass corsets and plaited their hair like beehives, beside her self-possessed carnality Cissie appeared a ridiculously unsuitable figure to rouse masculine desire. Perhaps the barmaid was indulging in a similar reflection, for as she poured out the Bass she stared from ice-cold calculating blue eyes at each of her two customers in turn.

John carried his glass over to the table, and to put an end to the awkwardness invited Cissie to tell him what had happened between the time he left her in Geneva and now.

"Well, it happened through an advertisement," she said. "After I finished at the Cafe Etöile last September I went back to France, and where I always like to be best really, and I got a job at a café concert in Bordeaux where I'd been working before. I had a friend in Bordeaux, an English fellow who was a clerk with one of the wine-shippers. He was a good age, over fifty I should say, but he wasn't married and he used to be very good to me. Of course, I didn't care for him in that way, well,

for one thing he had a moustache which made you feel you was going under Westminster Bridge when he kissed you Still, there it was He was very good to me, and it doesn't do to be too particular when you're a girl like me who doesn't really attract only men who nobody else will look at He had a friend who had a pony and trap, and they both of them used to drive me out of a Sunday, and which I liked because you get all stuffed up hanging about in a café till two in the morning and drinking flûtes and bocks and whatnot, not to mention dancing and singing

"Well, this friend of mine always had the *News of the World* sent him regular every week from home He liked reading about all the murders He used to say when anyone had been away from England for years like what he had it was only the murders and divorces and suchlike which gave you the feeling you was back at home again They never seem to change, he always said Well, he was reading his *News of the World* one Sunday afternoon last March, because he always read it of a Sunday, though of course out in Bordeaux it was always the Sunday before which he was reading, but though it used to come regular on a Tuesday he wouldn't open it till the Sunday 'You *are* barmy,' I used to tell him, but no he wouldn't open it He was like that Very quiet But as obstinate as they make 'em Well, on this Sunday afternoon in March when we couldn't go out driving with his friend in the pony and trap because the weather was so rotten, he suddenly called out, 'Cis, hark at this advertisement If Miss Cicely Oliver, last heard of in 1896 at Chertsey, Surrey, will call at Messrs Brinton, Hargreaves, and Bond at 160

Howard Street, Strand, W C , she will hear of something to her advantage' 'Well,' I said, 'what of it?' I said 'That's got nothing to do with me, that hasn't,' I said 'Firstly my name's Cecilia Mary and secondly I was never in Chertsey in 1896, or any other time if it comes to that,' I said But of course his lordship as usual was obstinate He started to puff through his moustache, and which was a habit he had when he was being obstinate, and argue me out that this firm of solicitors might have made a slight mistake through them hearing of me as Cissie Oliver and thinking Cissie was short for Cecily 'Yes,' I said, 'and I suppose they made another mistake and thought Chertsey was short for Princess May Road, Stoke Newington, which was where my poor old mother was living in 1896 and her the only relation I had in the world I was all over the place myself in 1896, but I was never in Chertsey The nearest I ever got to Surrey was in panto with George Conquest at the Surrey Theatre about 1890 I don't remember the exact year, but it was Vallingtime and Orson '

"It was no good He just puffed away at his moustache, and nothing would satisfy him but I must go back to England next day and become a millionairess right off 'Why don't you let me write?' I said But he said writing was no good Solicitors wanted to be sure they had the right person when there was money knocking around Well, to cut a long story short he offered to pay my fare back to London and give me ten pounds for my expenses while I was becoming a millionairess, and seeing it was no use arguing with him any more I gave in The *patron* was a bit annoyed when he heard I was going off at a moment's notice like that, but when

my friend told him I was going for money he brought a bottle of champagne and we drank *salut* all round. The French are like that. They think a lot about money. Still, I suppose we all do. Only they're more open about it. I crossed over by Havre and Southampton and got to London all right, but when I went to the solicitors it was just as I thought. It was another girl altogether, and she'd already been and heard of whatever it was to her advantage. They didn't tell me what it was. Just showed me out and said they were sorry I'd been put to such inconvenience, but the advertisement had been worded quite clearly. When I was walking down Howard Street to Temple Station I felt so wild I think if my friend had been there I'd have pulled his massive moustache out by the roots.

"But that wasn't the worst of it. I told you he'd given me ten pounds for my expenses. Well, if ever you heard of a judgment on any one, listen to this. You remember when I met you in Geneva I'd just lost my bag and I found it again through St Anthony? Well, when I was praying I promised I'd try and live a better life in some ways. You know I as good as said I'd never have anything to do again with the one or two friends who I'd been nice to. Well, of course, when I got to Bordeaux this promise went the way all men's promises go, and I missed my duties if you know what that means, but a Catholic girl ought to watch out and not do that, and then the judgment came on me, because my bag was pinched that morning in the Underground on my way back to the room where I was staying in Earl's Court. I'd laid it beside me, on the seat like a fool. It was there at Westminster Bridge and I missed it at Sloane Square.

Well, I told the landlady in Finborough Road what had happened and she agreed to let me stay on for a week till I could hear from my friend in Bordeaux

"And then what do you think happened? Why, after waiting for a fortnight I got a letter from the woman who kept house for him to say my friend and the friend of his who had the pony and trap had gone for a drive and been run into by a train and were both dead and buried Well, I explained what had happened to the landlady, and though she looked down her nose a bit (because the letter was in French you'll understand and she may have thought I was telling the tale), she agreed to let me stay on another week and look for work I did ask her to lend me the money to pay my fare back to Bordeaux, but that was a bit more than she could stand, and I didn't blame her But could I get any work? No, I couldn't Anyway, I pawned enough of my things to pay her the half of what I owed, and then I moved into a cheaper room, and then one night a fellow followed me from Earl's Court Station and I took him in But don't ask me to tell you any more Because the rest is beyond a joke I suppose when that fellow went back with me and gave me a pound I thought I'd soon get enough to pay my fare back to France where I knew I'd get work, but I was wrong "

The little woman whose heavy rouge but called attention to her peaked face and pointed nose and retreating chin drank the hot whisky, hardly lukewarm by now, and sat back in a moody silence

"Thank goodness, I met you to-night," John exclaimed "Where are you living?"

She named a street near the Euston Road

"But I don't take men there," she went on "It's an hotel or nothing for me But I couldn't afford gay rooms "

"I haven't the money with me now," he told her, "but I'll send it to you to-morrow, and you can get your things out of pawn and pay your fare back to Bordeaux "

"Not to Bordeaux," she said quickly "I think Bordeaux isn't my lucky number I could go to Lyons There's a place there where I've often worked and the *patron* is a good sort But, Johnnie, can you afford it? It's an expensive fare "

"Certainly I can afford it "

She put out her hand and caught him by the wrist anxiously

"You don't think I'm telling you the tale, Johnnie? I won't say I didn't hope you might offer to help me when you heard of the trouble I was in, but I wouldn't have asked you right out in case you couldn't have afforded it and that would have made you feel uncomfortable I think nothing makes anyone feel so uncomfortable as when somebody asks them for money and they simply haven't got it to give, and you're afraid of being thought mean "

"I think I've enough money of my own in the bank But if I haven't I can get it from my father Will twenty-five pounds be enough?"

"Will twenty-five pounds be enough?" she gasped

And then to his acute embarrassment and the steely interest of the barmaid she began to sob, the tears rolling down her cheeks and sticking in the powder like the first raindrops on drouthy ivy leaves at summer's end

"It's silly to cry," she sniffed, "but it's the goodness of the Holy Family You see, I put my case before them

this morning in a church where I go when I've been thinking that one of the bridges might do the trick for me, and I promised if only they would take me out of this awful muddle somehow I'd shake my head even to the men friends I might meet at my work. Of course, I'd promised as much before, but a promise to a saint isn't quite the same thing somehow, God forgive me. And now here's the answer."

"But will you be sure of work in Lyons?"

"I'll be sure of work somewhere in France. They give girls a longer run there than what they give them in England. I might go on getting engagements for several years yet."

"And then?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, I might get married," she said.

But John saw her in the future growing more and more peaked, saw her nose sharpening and her thin body shrivelling, saw her, within a few years now, incapable of earning even the wretched livelihood into which misfortune had recently plunged her. What would happen to her then? Once upon a time in Geneva, when she had rescued him from a difficulty which was so infinitely minute compared with the immense difficulty that the whole of her future life must present to this solitary woman, she had looked forward into the future and spoken of her dream to save enough money to take a little shop somewhere in an English country town where she could sell sweets and tobacco and papers and be able to enjoy talking to her customers. How much would such a shop cost? More than she was ever likely to save. How much would such a shop cost? Would

Elise lend him the money which he could repay her when he was of age? Or would his father advance it?

"Look here, Cissie Give me your address I'll come round to your house to-morrow afternoon with the money "

"Not there," she said quickly "I wouldn't let you come there, not if I was dying I'll meet you somewhere I don't mean anywhere where you'd be ashamed of being seen with me, but some quiet place near where I live But not where I live It's an awful place, Johnnie It is really "

John tried to insist on seeing the house where she was lodging because he wanted to arm himself with the facts in case there was opposition to his plan The misery of a human creature could be so much more effectively painted if he beheld that misery However, the little woman was firm in her refusal to give him her address and threatened that if he succeeded in tracing her home she would refuse all his help and fling herself from one of the Thames bridges rather than meet him again

"There's a limit to what anyone can stand," she declared "And I couldn't stand for you to see the place where I'm living now "

In the end they arranged to meet in this same saloon bar the next evening

John put Cissie's case before Elise in the morning

"I could give her the money to go back to France, but that's only postponing a repetition of what has happened to her since she left Bordeaux I don't know what one might have to pay for a small shop, but I suppose one could buy a business for about £200 I believe the paper to look in is the *Morning Advertiser* If you can't lend me the money until I come into my capital I'll ask

father, but I wouldn't like him to think there had ever been anything between me and this poor woman, and I wouldn't like him to run away with the idea that I was going to be easily imposed upon by anybody who asked for money. My notion was to give her enough to get her things out of pawn and live in some decent lodgings until the right business is found. I have £32 in the bank at the moment, and I shall be getting my money for Oxford so that I can spend this £32. I was going to spend it on pictures and extra furniture for my rooms anyway, so that it only means going without them, which is nothing. If you can't manage the amount for the shop, you must tell me frankly, and if I tackle father you'll have to support me."

Elise pondered for a moment. She was thinking what an excellent opportunity this might be for bringing her husband and her stepson together if only Alec would be sympathetic. But could she count on Alec? If he were to approach the matter with the conventional caution of a lawyer and a man of the world he would finally antagonize John. They were beginning to show signs of establishing a friendship. John had gone down with him to Dunchester last week and heard him address a meeting of his supporters. He must have been tactful too, because Alec had told her when he came back that he believed John had thoroughly enjoyed himself and had commented on the political situation with a good deal of intelligence. Yes, he must have been trying to be tactful, for he had confided to her that Liberals were a complete puzzle to him, and that after his father was supposed to have given a particularly clear and full exposition of Liberal policy during the years when they were preparing

to assume the burden of government which would at last fall from the weary shoulders of the Unionists

"I'll lend you the money, John," she said

When John met Cissie again in the saloon bar of that public-house she was still wearing the bedraggled summer frock, and soaked by the cold rain which had set in with an unseasonable east wind earlier in the day. She had left off her rouge, and he was shocked by the grey pallor and the hollow eyes which were now painfully evident. He reminded her of the shop she had told him about in Geneva and asked her if she still had the same fancy. At first she would not listen to the idea.

"What? Start setting girls up for life at your age? Don't be silly, Johnnie. Why, everyone would think you'd got me in the family way and I was trying to put it across you. No, if you pay my fare back to Lyons you'll have done more than your share where I'm concerned."

"We'll argue about that when you've got yourself some proper clothes and found yourself some decent rooms. You don't look well to-night."

"I'm not feeling very well."

"I've brought you ten pounds for immediate expenses." As he said this John was aware that the cold-eyed barmaid was watching them and he resolved not to give Cissie the gold in front of her. "Look here," he went on, "I'm not going to give you the money in this place. I think you ought to go home anyway. I'll drive you back in a cab, and to-morrow morning you can clear out and get your coat out of pawn and we'll find you proper lodgings somewhere. You can meet me for lunch at Roche's in Old Compton Street. One o'clock. I'll be waiting for you outside, because it's often rather crowded and

noisy "You'd better have some hot whisky now before we go "

"No, no; I couldn't touch anything I feel rotten, Johnnie You can drive me to the corner of Lessing Street where I live I'll be out of it to-morrow You are good to me You mustn't think I'm taking it for granted like the one-eyed Mexican who pushed his best girl under a tramcar and never even begged her pardon "

Lessing Street was a dim forbidding row of ramshackle houses in Somers Town She pushed up the trap and told the driver to stop

"Roche R-o-c-h-e," he spelt "On the left-hand side of Old Compton Street going toward the Palace I'll be waiting for you at one o'clock "

He jumped out of the cab to help her out

"Good lord, you are wet," he exclaimed "Get to bed at once, won't you? "

"Oh yes, I'll snuggle down under the blankets Ta-ta, see you to-morrow, Johnnie "

She had pushed the sovereigns he had given her down one of her stockings, and from where he stood on the pavement watching her walk up the street it seemed to him that she dragged one of her legs as if even the weight of the gold was too much for her weakness The door of the house before which she stopped was exactly opposite the only lamp-post on that side of the short squalid street As in her sodden summer frock she let herself in with her key there flashed back to him a sudden memory of Rose letting herself in into the house in Portman Square in that May dawn only four months ago, and when he arrived back in Church Row that evening he found an invitation to her wedding at Paxford in October

"I'll go," he told the shimmering silvery letters
There was a note from Rose herself in the morning

MEDLICOTT HALL,
PAXFORD,
LOAMSHIRE

September 17, 1901

Dear John,

Mother has sent you an invitation to my wedding I don't know if you'll be up at Oxford already, but I would like you to come if you can It would make me very happy

With love from
Rose

He was glad he had made up his mind the night before and accepted the invitation already He would write and tell Rose that

There was no sign of Cissie Oliver when John reached Roche's, and there was no sign of her when he had been waiting outside for half an hour At two o'clock she had still not arrived So he went in and managed to get a table from which he could keep an eye on the street At half-past two when he had finished his lunch Cissie had not come She must have made a mistake in the name of the restaurant He walked up and down Old Compton Street peeping into the various eating-places, but did not find her in any one of them The only thing for it was to go over to Somers Town and try to obtain some news of her in Lessing Street

At Number 8 the house opposite the lamp-post the door was opened by a smutty-faced girl with the per-

petually open mouth of adenoids, who when she saw the caller seemed inclined to slam the door in his face

"Doesn't Miss Oliver live here?"

"'Oo?"

"Miss Cissie Oliver "

"No one doesn't live here o'ny Mrs Tew, and she's not a tome just now "

"But Miss Oliver was living here till this morning anyway, because I saw her come back last night "

The girl's mouth gaped wider She looked back over her shoulder in obvious perplexity Then she called to somebody in a room at the back

"Mr Meggy! Mr Meggy! Jest c'mera minute, Mr Meggy, please!"

From the room at the back emerged a red-faced unshaven man in corduroy trousers and the filthiest shirt John had ever seen

"What's all this?" demanded the new-comer in a hoarse surly voice

"It's somebody come about her as was upstairs," the girl explained "I told him there wasn't nobody living here qn'y Mrs Tew "

"'Op it, you," Mr Meggy grumbled savagely "Can't you take bloody no for a bleedin' answer?"

"Look here," John replied in a rage, "I don't know what's going on in this house, but if I don't get a quick answer about Miss Oliver I'm going round to the police-station "

"Oh, you are, are you? Well, Mrs Tew's round with the perlice bloody now So 'op it like I told you to "

"Where's Miss Oliver?" John repeated.

"What's that to you?"

"I've come here from Miss Oliver's lawyer "

The red-faced man was clearly impressed by this

"Then you've come too late Because she died in the night We've only found it out just half a bloody hour back, and Mrs Tew's gone off to notify the perlice "

"Died in the night ?" John gasped "Do you mean she's dead ?"

"Well, if the pore bloody 'ore (because that's all as she was) died in the night even a —— of a lawyer ought to know she ain't alive now "

John turned on his heels He would find out the truth at the police-station The inspector to whom he told his story shook his head

"It's a rotten bad house," he declared "You gave her ten pounds, eh, last night? I wonder still, I don't think they'd have notified us And you say she did seem ill? Well, the station surgeon has just gone round there now It'll depend on what he says You'd better wait, or no, I'll send you round with a constable, and you can tell the surgeon what you've just told me "

The arrival of John with a constable brought the neighbours of that ramshackle street to their doors Grimy children clustered by the railings of Number 8

Mr Meggy was not in evidence on this occasion, and the smutty-faced girl led them up three foul-smelling flights of uncarpeted stairs to the attic where Cissie Oliver had died There was no furniture except a three-legged chair on which stood a chipped enamel basin The cracked panes of the dormer window were patched with newspaper, and mouldering laths showed among the plaster of the ceiling like obscene ribs except where a hole right through revealed the pantiles of the roof On a bundle

of rags in the corner lay the body of Cissie Oliver dressed still in that faded summer frock. The doctor, a neat brisk little man, was questioning a great shapeless woman whose crooked bonnet gave her a drunken look.

"It's a clear case of exposure aggravated by undernourishment," the doctor was declaring.

John suddenly made up his mind to say nothing more about the ten pounds. If the wretched inhabitants of this house had found them and taken them, let them keep them. He felt guilty as a member of the society which could tolerate the existence of houses like this. The ten pounds should count as blood money paid by himself.

"I wish to defray the expenses of this poor woman's funeral," he announced.

The police-surgeon looked at him sharply.

"That's all right, sir," the constable put in. "Inspector Dawkins sent me round with this gentleman. There was some question of money."

"Question of money!" Mrs. Tew interrupted with shrill indignation. "Yes, there certainly is a question of money. She owed me for two weeks at four shillings a week, and that's eight shillings. I've lost not to mention all the people in the street staring at my house the same as if it was a murder. That's all the thanks anyone gets for being a bit soft-hearted these days. Half the bluebottles in the district buzzing round a poor woman's house to make a poppy-show of me."

"Here's your eight shillings," said John. Anything, anything, to help free himself from the sense of shame which lay so heavily upon him for the starvation of an unhappy woman who had offered all she had, her body, for food and shelter and clothing.

The constable was about to say something, but John stopped him

"I made a mistake," he said curtly "I'll explain to the Inspector Will there be an inquest?" he asked, turning to the doctor

"It's a clear enough case, but of course an inquest will be necessary"

John explained to the Inspector that he had gone to Lessing Street with the intention of giving the dead woman ten pounds and he pulled out the sovereigns from his pocket in proof of this The inspector looked at him shrewdly

"Oh, well, sir," he said at last "I can see your point of view All the same it goes a bit against the grain to let the people in that house get away with it And I suppose you'd rather not be called as a witness before the coroner?"

"I don't mind as far as I'm concerned But I wouldn't like it to get into the papers on account of my father"

He told who his father was, whereupon the Inspector immediately declared that there was no need to call him as a witness

"The doctor says it is a clear case, and there's no need to drag other people into it"

So in the end, although John attended the inquest, he was asked no questions

"It seems a clear case, gentlemen," said the coroner to the twelve jurymen all of whom had the offended expression of men who had been interrupted in their business of gaining their daily bread The jury nodded unanimously They wanted to get back to work as soon as possible So a verdict of death from natural causes was returned The woman belonged to the unfortunate class, as the

coroner had pointed out, and if women like that walked the streets in summer frocks on empty stomachs their deaths weré in the order of things. No rider was added to the verdict, no rider pointing out that such a death was a blot upon the perfect civilization of the greatest city of the world's greatest empire in the nineteenth hundred and first year of the Lord. Any commiseration required was required for the gentlemen of the jury who had been caught like minnows in the indifferent net of the Law and were gasping to breathe their natural element again.

When John was confronted by the complications which the burial of a solitary woman found dead in a wretched lodging-house entailed he was tempted to give up the responsibility he had expressed his intention of assuming and nearly took the inspector's advice to leave her body to the care of the parish. Fortunately for his peace of mind he consulted the nearest priest, a robust Irishman, who after hearing the story of Cissie Oliver so far as John could tell it came to the rescue and a grave was secured for her in the Catholic cemetery at Kensal Green.

"And I'd like to put up some kind of a simple stone cross," John told Father Burke when he visited him the day after Cissie Oliver had been buried. "It's asking a great deal of you, but if you could have the right kind of epitaph inscribed, I'd be most awfully obliged. I noticed a good many with *Jesus Mercy, Mary Help*. I think she'd like to have that put on. And if you would let me know what it costs I'll send you the money. And also I'd like to have Mass said for her. She was really very pious as I told you."

"And you're not a Catholic, eh?" Father Burke

observed, with a quizzical glance at this strange young man

John had a sudden impulse to say that he wished to become a Catholic, but Fitz's warning against emotional ardours intervened

"No, I have to make up my mind more clearly about such a step," he said "But that will not prevent you from doing what I ask?"

"It certainly will not Let me see Cecilia Mary Oliver was the poor creature's name I'll just make a note of that Well, Mr Ogilvie, it has been a great pleasure to meet you " The priest hesitated a moment "And if ever," he went on rapidly, "if ever you do make up your mind by God's grace, don't seek out some intellectual Jesuit father, but go to a simple parish priest And don't think that piece of advice just my confounded impudence "

"I'll remember it," John promised "And you'll let me know what I owe you for everything?"

"You can be sure of that," Father Burke promised with a boisterous guffaw, on the echoes of which John left his dingy little house in that district of railway lines and gasworks, of slaughter-houses and slums and model gaols—one of the flowers in the buttonhole of the nineteenth century's respectable frock-coat

When John got home he found a letter from Miriam Stern waiting for him with a note from Emil to say that he was back in London for the new term and asking John if he could manage it to come and have supper with him in Claremont Gardens that evening

*Poste Restante,
Cracow*

My dearest John,

We have found Julius his house, and I am writing to tell you, about it because I know that Emil will tell you nothing more than that it is a house. I won't bother you with difficult Polish names, but it is about forty miles from Cracow and according to the point of view at the end of nowhere or the beginning of everywhere. It is in an old-fashioned fairy-tale countryside—goose-girls wandering with their flocks about the fields from which the second crop of hay was just cut, and painted wooden houses with high steep roofs finishing almost on the ground, and youths roaming about playing pipes and all looking like youngest sons who will help an old woman out of a difficulty and find that in doing so they have helped a powerful fairy who will show them the way to win the King's only daughter as a reward. The house of Julius is miles from a railway-station, and even the nearest railway-station is on the other side of the Vistula so that as soon as one gets out of the train one has to cross a ferry—a lovely lazy ferry which makes one feel one would like to go drifting down the river for ever and not bother to reach the opposite bank at all.

The house itself is not too large and the big kitchen will make a perfect music room. The outside is covered with a sky-blue wash, and when we saw it first from far away among its cherry-trees and plum-trees we thought it was a pool of water. In every direction the land stretches absolutely flat in great tracts of grass, or fields of corn which is stubble now, but which will be wonderful when it is all a waving mass of gold next

summer with the cloud-shadows moving serenely across it And the women working in the fields wear such bright petticoats and scarves that when you see them in the distance they look like patches of growing flowers I have found an admirable woman to look after Julius—a widow without children and with all her relations in America He is enchanted that I gave way about what he calls the lady help Probably he is right He will feel much more his own master with a simple peasant woman than with a faded duenna and he will probably be better looked after from a maternal point of view I have told her about his illness and the importance of being well and simply fed, and I have extracted from him a most solemn vow to allow himself to be mothered, with the threat of refusing to leave him or of finding the lady help he so much dreads

Emil upset me by prophesying that the peasants would soon find out Julius was a Jew and that he would probably be murdered by them as an act of piety In the end I decided to take the village priest into my confidence and explain exactly what Julius had done and what he hoped to do To Emil's boundless indignation, I may add, for Emil, in spite of his defiant proclamation of believing in nothing except the amelioration of mankind, is in his heart deeply attached to the traditions of our race I told the priest I should offer no opposition if Julius should discover that this life he has chosen inclined him to become a Christian We—Emil and I—had over that the greatest battle we have ever had He accused me of the basest pandering imaginable by my action, but the priest who is an extremely intelligent man seemed to understand perfectly my point of view and assured me that without

making the slightest effort to influence Julius he should treat him as one looking for the truth. Then it was arranged that Julius should study Latin and German and Polish with him. 'Latin' Emil scoffed, 'as if the dog Latin he would learn with him could be called Latin.'

But it was Julius himself who finally conquered any doubts the good priest may still have had by playing to him more exquisitely than I have ever heard him play, for—and this is just as it should be in such a fairy-tale country—the priest himself is a violinist. He had said nothing about this when I had first told him about Julius. Perhaps he did not believe me, and did not wish to appear discourteous. When Julius stopped, he went to a press, took out his own instrument, and tapped it. 'I have sought for the truth here,' he said, 'but I have never found it. No matter, I have found the truth elsewhere. Your son has found the truth here, and perhaps I may help him to find the truth elsewhere. I have a friend, a schoolmaster in a village twelve miles away, who plays the piano well enough to accompany your son. He will come to me every Saturday, and when the boy is in the mood what nights we shall have here this winter!'

And then he looked a little ruefully at his own cottage piano in the corner. Julius urged me to try it, and I played your favourite Traumerer. 'Well, I should call that more Alpdrucken than Traumerer,' said Julius bluntly. 'Alp' is nightmare in case your German fails you. The priest shook his head. 'It's the only piano we have.' 'There's plenty of room here for a small grand,' Julius announced. 'And as I shall have to have

a piano, it can be put here We will get one in Cracow' Our reverend friend was so excited that he rushed out of the house and called the boy who looks after his vegetables and poultry to send him off on horseback to tell the schoolmaster that he would find a new piano when he came to see him next I said hurriedly that it would probably take a little time to get the piano, and suggested that he should not raise his friend's hopes to such an extent 'But he must hear the news to-day,' the priest declared 'He has been wishing for a good piano for ten years His own is worse than mine' I suggested he should write the schoolmaster a note to explain that a new piano was expected, and that as soon as it arrived he should be told

So that was how the matter was settled, and yesterday Julius and I secured a lovely small Bluthner, which will reach the priest's house during the week Emil will no doubt tell you that I have behaved disgracefully, but do not heed what he says, dearest John, because I am infinitely relieved to think that I shall have a trustworthy person here who will keep me informed about Julius It seems much less of a risky experiment now I shall stay on until about November We are getting such delicious furniture, and you will have to go out and stay with Julius next Spring when the corn is green and you have your vacation I think I will leave him to himself for this winter with the priest and the widow and the schoolmaster and the snow

Write me your news when you have time and are in the mood for a letter Julius sends his love and so do I

Miriam

I shall see you in November, John.

The house in Claremount Gardens was almost eerily empty without her when he went round that evening to sup with Emil. The sea-green velvet curtains had been taken down and as a background to the dust-wrappers on the furniture, and particularly over the Steinway grand the grey walls were tristful and drear

The walls they were tristful and drear
 The skies they were ashen and sober,
 The leaves they were crispèd and sere—
 The leaves they were withering and sere,
 It was night in the lonesome October
 Of my most immemorial year

It might not be October yet, but there was a cold mist hanging over Hampstead to-night which had chilled to death the last illusion of summer's loitering, and the jingle of *Ulalume* ran in John's head when he stood in that grey drawing-room empty of its mistress

He was glad when he and Emil retired to the little room at the end of the front hall and they were sitting beside the gasfire, with the grandfather's romantic picture of revolutionary Poland in 1863 to stare at over the mantelpiece. This room did not miss her. This room belonged to Emil and himself. In years to come he would look back to this little room and to Fitz's little room at the end of the front hall in Trelawny Road with how much gratitude for the refuge they had offered from the oppressions of youth's unending present, twin caskets of futurity.

"I suppose *ma mère* has told you about this idiotic house of Julius's?" Emil asked.

"It sounds jolly good."

"Oh, the house is all right, but in a spasm of maternal apprehension she took a priest in tow as a mentor for the little man and I fear the worst."

"I disagree with you. It seems to me that the whole point of this withdrawal into what is as near to independence as anybody of his age ever achieved is to have a chance of making up his own mind."

"I don't consider our Julius has much mind to make up," the elder brother retorted. "Musicians never have, you know. As far as I can make out, they suffer from premature senility in youth and arrested development in age."

"Oh, well, you'll be going back to school to-morrow like a good little man yourself. To me that sounds infinitely more ridiculous than anything Julius could possibly do or think or become during this next winter."

Emil's delicate eyebrows met in a scowl which recalled his younger brother's expression.

"And the damnable thing is that I can't be Captain of the School because, forsooth, I'm a Jew!" Emil growled.

"You didn't tell me that in Cracow."

"I was top of the Upper Sixth last term," he went on. "I was ahead of nine people who are going up to the Varsity with scholarships next month and yet because I'm a Jew, Wilton, who was eleventh in the form in the exams last summer, Wilton is preferred to me."

"But why do you want to be Captain of the School?" John asked in amazement. "It's a most frightful bore except for the kind of people who always are captains of schools."

"That's not the point. I was head of the Upper Sixth last term. I shall be head of the Upper Sixth all this year. I shall get a scholarship at Balliol, and that tiresome ass Wilton, who will be lucky if he gets a scholarship at St John's, Cambridge, and probably won't manage more

than Emmanuel, Wilton is to be Captain over my head Because the Captain of the School has to read the Latin prayers every morning and afternoon I cannot take the position to which I am entitled It's incredible, why, we might still be living in the Middle Ages!"

"Emil, I think you're an awful humbug You've shaken me badly I believe that in your heart you're nothing but a besotted Kiplingesque Imperialist with visions of becoming a great proconsul one day My hat, you may even dream of being a second Disraeli for all I know, and defiling another lovely English flower by associating it with these filthy Party politics And I was looking forward to a lifelong friendship This is the most smashing disillusionment of my life"

"Can't you realize the absurdity of depriving somebody of the promotion to which he is entitled, for the sake of a string of Latin prayers?" Emil demanded

"You think the other seven hundred little darlings should go prayerless, is that it?"

"It wouldn't hurt them," Emil retorted with bitterness "But of course I'm not suggesting that What I maintain is that these Latin prayers are an outworn convention and that therefore I can read them with as much propriety as a dreary clod like Wilton "

"It's no use, Emil, I can't take your grievance seriously Nobody is more scornful than you about the figureheads of government, and now you want to be a figurehead yourself The captain of a school like St James's has no power Everybody who knows anything will know that you are the star brain of the place What would you gain by being stared at by a lot of squitty kids while you gabbled through prayers?"

"I have a good mind not to go back to the place at all to-morrow," said Emil moodily

"Now that is a good idea," John agreed, frankly enthusiastic

"No, it isn't," snapped the other "You don't think I'd easily find two such teachers of Greek and Latin as Harvey and Askew? Oh, I shall get over the irritation of it Don't let's talk about it any more "

John told him about Cissie Oliver and enlarged upon the reproach such a death as hers levelled against civilization

"Don't be so hysterically unbalanced," Emil adjured him "If a woman rashly chooses to consider herself capable of entertaining the public and then proceeds to betray her sex by underselling her body in the open market she can hardly expect to become a charge upon the state when business is bad "

"Damned little did she expect from anybody," declared John hotly

"And anyway you can't build up an indictment against what you call civilization on the behaviour of one foolish woman," Emil went on

"There was enough fuss made after she was dead If it's necessary to enquire into the causes of such a death it is much more necessary to provide against the occurrence of such a death "

"And how would you do that?"

"You social reformers are not usually slow to discover something with which to interfere You ought to be able to contrive a scheme for helping people in an emergency The religious orders used to be able to do it in those Middle Ages to which you feel the present is so superior."

"These sentimental gothic arguments of yours are extremely tiresome, John Why, women like Cissie Oliver were publicly birched in the Middle Ages, and exposed to every ignominy imaginable I never heard of your religious orders trying to interfere with such barbarities I hate all sentiment, but I hate most of all gothic sentiment Did you ever take the trouble to study the history of the Jews during the Middle Ages?"

"Emil, I don't want you to think my next remark offensive, but I must point out that your people are too much inclined to think that they enjoy a monopoly of being persecuted I recognize that they had an unpleasant time, but that unpleasant time must be judged in relation to the general condition of society It was a period of violence, when human nature was expressing itself violently in every direction In the Middle Ages you would never have been admitted as a scholar to St James's or to Balliol Yet confess that you resent the partial exclusion from which you suffer to-day more than you would have resented the complete exclusion which would have been your lot in the past "

"But it is such humbug If everybody or indeed if anybody believed in these prayers it would be a different matter, but nobody does They are retained as a convenient way of ensuring a punctual and orderly assembling of the school at the beginning and end of the day's work Religion nowadays is merely a desire to maintain authority, protect property, and keep people in their place The antipathy to Jews is no longer religious and it is hardly racial It is an antipathy based on a jealous fear of their superior level of intelligence and of their more realistic commercial sense To that may be added

distrust of a race which seems parasitic because it lacks a country of its own And I think that still another reason for the modern hatred of the Jews is the doubt they raise in the minds of the European imperialist who wants to assure himself that all Asiatics and Africans are naturally inferior to himself It is galling for those who would like to partition China and its three or four hundred million inhabitants among a quartet of European powers to wonder how much they themselves may be at the mercy of Asiatics like us "

"Then since you have discovered the cause why do you bother your head about the effect? The captaincy of the school is only another convention Surely you can afford to despise it?"

"I suppose I can," Emil assented, but there was still a moodiness in his tone

"This year will soon pass, and you'll be coming up to Oxford I shall be glad when you are there "

"Will you be? I wonder I've a notion that you'll repeat your school career at the University You'll find such a lot of jolly fellows whom you rather like and who will rather like you, and you'll be driven by that into knowing the right people and joining the right clubs and leading the normal life of a fashionable undergraduate I may be wrong, John I'd like to be wrong But I don't believe that you'll be able to resist floating along on the surface with the rest Even when you had a chance to escape you went and joined those ridiculous Volunteers You think you are going to write plays But if you do you'll only write plays about the minor complications of ordinary people with the object of entertaining enough ordinary people to give you enough money to lead still

more comfortably the comfortable life you enjoy and then go on writing more plays about it. Occasionally you will be brought up against discomfort by a Cissie Oliver, and perhaps one day some particularly flagrant instance of it will lead you to write a play burning with a purely sentimental sense of social injustice. But it won't have such a good run as your usual plays, and although you will intend to disregard that, nevertheless somehow or other you won't disregard it and gradually you will sentimentalize your own sentimentality and humbug yourself with the notion that fate denied you the chance to express yourself as you wished. It will always be fate, of course, which will be the culprit, not your own choice of the easier way."

"Your mother thought I should benefit from a course of workaday existence," John countered.

Emil darted a look at him.

"My mother is in love with you," he said, "and therefore you have roused the deep conservative instincts of her womanhood to protect you. That is why I shall never love a woman. They are brakes on progressive thought."

John felt it was useless to contradict the statement about his mother. Contradiction might make Emil suppose that he thought he had been caught in an intrigue, and was ashamed of it.

"It's a kind of jealousy too," Emil went on. "She is not so foolish as to imagine that she can keep for herself a youth twenty years younger than herself, but she hopes to lock you up in an academic cell until she has the strength to surrender you to one of the innumerable women who will find you the embodiment of their romantic dreams."

John flushed.

"Look here, I object to being turned into a *petit-maitre* "

"Oh, you'll never be that It's no use blushing about it, though "

"I wasn't blushing I may have got red with annoyance at what you said, but that's not blushing "

"What I was going to add when you interrupted," Emil continued calmly, "was that unfortunately for your protestations I know from personal experience the kind of charm in you which will captivate women It is true that I loved you with what I consider was a far more inspiring passion than any woman could give you, but I have to admit, humiliating though such an admission may be, that presumably there must be some feminine quality in me which responds to your personality You made a great song about your affair with that girl in the country, but I could not take it very seriously, because I knew that any woman who caught you in the right responsive mood must fall wildly in love with you "

"In spite of my fascination this girl in the country is marrying somebody else next week," John observed sarcastically

"What has marriage got to do with the passionate side of the business? She is an English girl of the squirearchy, and therefore powerless to escape from the hundreds of years of breeding which have gone to fit her for the acquisition of land by marriage What else could the poor girl do but marry as suitably as she intends to? The best you could have given her was a year of Romeonishness and Juliettery, by the end of which you would have fallen in love with somebody else Why, you have all your twenties, and your thirties, and your forties, and perhaps even

your fifties in which to love and be loved by women, not to mention art and politics and more adventure I don't want to pry into what you and my mother have talked about, but I am certain that she has faced your inevitable future, and from what I know of her I am equally certain that she will face it gracefully. Perhaps I shall annoy you, perhaps shock you, if I say that I hope she was lucky enough to fling away her pride, her sense of the ridiculous, and the conventions she has formed to fit in with her experience of life, and enjoy you however briefly as a lover. I have killed that side of my feeling for you, John, but not so as to leave it rotting and repulsive. I can still think that if I could have caught you in the right responsive mood I would have touched the perfection of emotional experience, quickly adding that the loss of the most perfect emotional experience is not irreparable but that on the other hand its loss will probably add to the perfection of intellectual experience.

"Well, I've said something of what I wanted to say to you to-night, but what I've not said is how much you have done for me. Your friendship has changed these last two years for me. I have suffered torments of jealousy over boys, over girls, over Julius, over my mother even, but you have given me far more than you denied me or took away from me. And though I argue with you, and though I have to despise your easy manners and easy popularity and cursed sense of humour I'll be thinking all this year of finding you again at Oxford. And if as I expect by next October I'll have worked myself up into a state of being slighted by everything you may say or do, it will only mean that I am afraid you have no further use for me. You see, I haven't been able to hide from myself

that you are really more interested in Julius nowadays than you are in me "

"But, Emil, you forget that without our friendship I could never have had my friendship with your mother or your brother You are always so down on my superficiality that I dread vowing fidelity to a friendship All I can say is that there is nobody who could take your place Surely it's a mistake to make friendship or love a question of quantity' Fitzgerald for instance gives me something which you cannot give me "

"What?" interrupted Emil to demand fiercely

"I suppose I should call it a spiritual ideal Now don't raise your eyebrows I was going on to say that Julius and your mother both give me something you cannot give So does my stepmother Rose gave me something If it comes to that Connie Fenwick and that poor little woman who's dead and that French girl in Geneva all gave me something you cannot give But do remember that you give me something which none of them can give, and that something is such a very great deal if you *must* think of friendship and love in terms of quantity After all, do I give *you* everything?"

"You could have given me everything "

John shook his head and smiled

"I couldn't even give you the captaincy of the school Be honest with yourself, Emil, and admit that I could only give you everything by losing myself in you, by the time I'd done which you wouldn't know I was there "

"Oh well, it's no use theorizing over the possible results of an experiment which was never practical," said Emil

"Do you remember that essay we wrote for Askew on

the difference in the attitude of the classical poets and the modern romantic poets toward love?"

Emil nodded

"You persuaded me not to show up mine," he said "Nevertheless, it would have been the only essay which contributed anything to the discussion. And you must admit that to steep ourselves in the literature of Greece and Rome, and at the same time to pretend that what is perhaps the chief emotional foundation of such a literature is unfit for open discussion is to turn our classical education into a bad joke."

"I do recognize that while we are being swayed by a classical education and while the emotions of boyhood and adolescence are being all the time deliberately distracted from the sexual idea of woman we behave normally by indulging our vitality with boys' love, but I suspect that woman offers man nowadays a much more potentially rich emotional adventure than she could offer him in ancient Greece or ancient Rome. Putting aside all theological prejudices, I would hazard that the most signal triumph of Christianity has been the comparatively rapid development of women."

"Another powerful argument against Christianity," Emil muttered

"That's begging the question. The point I wish to make is that a woman is better worth while loving to-day than she was in the time of Pericles."

"Aspasia?"

"You cannot develop a sex by outlawing it," John said "No doubt in a way it's absurd for you and me with our little pinch of experience to be theorizing like this, but I know intuitively that I am right, and I believe that any

attempt to restrict emotional experience to our adolescent fancies must leave the grown-up man in some way incomplete. You think that if you and I had changed the ground of our friendship and turned it into physical desire for one another we should have enriched it. I don't. On the contrary I believe it has actually been enriched by what we have withheld from it. I became friends with you at the moment when I was finding passions for boys with peachbloom complexions and slim figures an unsatisfactory repetition of one another, and so where my friendship with you began I did not waste any emotion on that side of it. You had not indulged your casual fancies to the extent I had, and therefore you had not suffered from the disillusionment of satiety. If we had become friends a year earlier than we did, I've no doubt at all that it would have meant a love-affair between us, but, don't forget, that it would also probably have meant that at this moment instead of sitting here and talking as intimately as we are both talking now we should long ago have passed out of one another's ken, and if we ever thought about each other we should have thought with an idle wonder at what we had seen in one another once upon a time. It's no use looking at me with such disapproval, Emil. I shall never search any more for love from one of my own sex, though perhaps when I grow old I shall look back to the boyish passions of school with the conviction that they were the real flower of passion. I think what most attracts us all about ancient Greece is that it was a world of glorious schoolboys whose like man will never know again."

"I shall never care for women as you are evidently determined to care for them," Emil declared. "Women

repel me In any case, I don't intend to be the slave of that side of myself I must be free myself if I am ever to hope to smash some of the chains which fetter the world I could imagine with you an ideal freedom of two, but since that is not to be I will do without all except myself "

"But we shall go on being friends?" John asked, with a hint of anxiety in his tone

"Yes, if in a few years' time you are still recognizable as an individual and are not merely a unit in an effete society waiting to be swept away by the uprushing flood of the people "

"I think you'll have to watch your rhetoric, Emil," said John severely "Very few revolutionary leaders long survive their own eloquence"

"You don't think I shall be fool enough to talk like that in public, do you? Or that I shall talk like that even in private when I've finished with these years of preparation? I'm not a Young Liberal or a Social Democrat "

"Well," said John, rising, "I'm unwilling to go, because this evening marks the end of a stage in our life, but I've got to go sometime, and the end of the stage will come with sunrise even if I sit up here jawing with you all night Besides, I've been reading aloud to my step-mother every evening recently, and I want to finish off *Emma* this week I suppose you wouldn't condescend to read Jane Austen?"

"I once read *Pride and Prejudice*, but it seemed to me extraordinarily trivial stuff "

John sighed

"When you say things like that I could wish that you would be blown sky-high with the first bomb of your damned revolution," he exclaimed

Emil grinned maliciously

"Now perhaps you can understand what the earnest Conservative feels when he hears his cherished institutions criticized by radicals. You are contemptuous of his hurt feelings, but the novels of Jane Austen are only another expression of privilege and property—the two chief ills which afflict humanity. You'll laugh at the bottle-nosed colonel, but dress the bottle-nosed colonel up as a Regency spinster in a country vicarage and you turn as true blue as the colonel's nose. So go away, you relic of antiquity, I must get to bed."

"Yes, you must have a good night or you'll be committing a final cretic, breaking a caesura, or putting a properispomenon instead of a paroxysm. Give my love to Harvey and Askew, and tell Wilton with my compliments to wash his neck a little oftener now that he's captain of the school."

A quarter of an hour later John was with Elise in the small sitting-room into which one of the bedrooms in Church Row had been transformed for her privacy. Over the fireplace hung a convex Dutch mirror, and while he was reading *Emma* to her the thought occurred to John of how like a Dutch mirror was Jane Austen herself, reflecting small tranquil corners of the world, each of them rounded by the frame of her art to the similitude of a whole world in miniature.

"I shall miss these charming hours with Jane Austen when you leave us in a fortnight, John," sighed Elise as

the small ormolu clock beneath the mirror chimed eleven and a chapter came to an end, and the volume was closed

"I shall miss them too I was looking at David this morning He's getting much more human now, isn't he?"

"John!"

"I mean losing that monkey-like look which recently born babies all have When actually does a baby get at all interesting?"

"They're interesting from the moment they are born"

"To mothers perhaps, but not to anybody else, surely? It's a queer business Having children, I mean I can't believe it's just an accident in space"

"Having children?" exclaimed Elise

"The whole business of life on this planet," he added "Next week I'm going down to Paxford for Rose's wedding"

"You can regard the spectacle quite philosophically?"

"Yes, I think it's easier to recover from a sudden shock And that was the way I heard of her engagement to Henry Falconer I suppose you think that an emotion which passes so quickly could never have been very profound?"

"I don't think the depth of an emotion can be tested by cutting it off prematurely from any chance to express itself The tests of love are usage and habit and continual propinquity and the capacity of two people for mutual accommodation You and Rose will never know how successfully you might have settled down into married life together I doubt if anything can be taken for granted from the violence of a first attraction Lots of people would say that the very violence of it is of itself enough to make it short-lived I would say that these violent attractions even when they are mutual possess a purely personal

importance That you have recovered your equanimity already proves, if it proves anything, that you have a reasonable ego You are not prepared to go through life without the slightest awareness of your relation to the rest of humanity This will always lead to your being suspected of shallowness by those who have an exaggerated idea of the depth of their own feelings, owing to their own enjoyment of an illimitable dissatisfaction Will you spin from inside like Charlotte Bronte and the spider or with a spinning-wheel like Jane Austen? With Richardson or with Fielding?"

"With Fielding every time," John declared

"If you carry out your intentions and become a dramatist, that may be all to the good, but I rather fancy subjectivity will have an ever increasing importance in art during the time before us I've been talking to a clever woman friend of mine this afternoon Hence the brightness of my conversation at this late hour I fancy women will surprise us presently And that means subjectivity at the helm My sex produces a thousand potential Brontes, Charlottes, Annes, and even Emilys, for one potential Jane Austen "

At this moment a faint perfume of cigar-smoke warned Elise and John that the head of the household had opened the library door

"Alec will be on my tracks in a moment, John I'm apparently to be made to go to bed early for the rest of this autumn "

John went along to join his father, and as usual he was asked first if Elise had gone to her room and next if he had seen Carruthers Gould's latest caricature in the *Westminster Gazette*

"We must get this war finished," proclaimed the barrister, "and then we shall be able really to begin the business of discrediting this ignominious Tory Government. The only hope for the country's future lies in a sane, a courageous, and a genuinely progressive Liberalism. I shall be interested to hear what the younger generation is thinking. I'm told that modern Oxford grows more Liberal all the time and that they will hear nothing there of this attack on Free Trade by that weathercock demagogue Chamberlain."

"I suppose trade is very important," said John.

"What? Why of course it's important," his father replied with a trace of irritation.

"That's what I said. I suppose trade is very important."

And with this John went off to bed himself.

Alexander Ogilvie, with half a sigh, picked up again the brief he had been studying. John had been seeming a little more sensible lately. He wished he would not make ambiguous observations like that. They argued such a want of grip upon essentials. And he had been apparently taking a more intelligent interest in practical politics. Heaven forbid he should resent the evidence of Athene's temperament in this son of hers and his, and yet and yet her destructive indifference to the hard common sense of existence could irritate sharply when it was no longer enshrined in her living self. That fast remark of John's about trade was just the kind of ironical doubt she would cast upon the obvious. Still, there was a good deal in John. Elise had told him that her father had been more favourably struck by him than by any young man she could remember. Oh well, if he was going to have an eccentric elder son he must make up his mind to the fact. At any rate he had money of his own.

Upstairs in his bedroom the subject of this reflection was asking himself how a sensible and successful man like his father could get himself into a state of mind which allowed him to talk about a sane, courageous, and progressive Liberalism when he was in the privacy of his own library. Presumably by repeating a shibboleth like that on public platforms he had come to believe that it actually meant something. A parson might as well ejaculate to his wife over the marmalade at breakfast 'O Lord, open Thou our lips, and our mouths shall shew forth Thy praise', and expect her to be impressed by his piety. And it was armed with such pointless platitudes that his father fancied himself able to attack the self-complacent conservatism which had dragged its huge unwieldy saurian body and button-head from the steaming marshes of Victorianism into the present. He had been wise to take himself quickly off to bed. Otherwise he might have said something offensive, and for the sake of Elise he was resolved to keep on the best of terms with his father. A sane, courageous, and progressive Liberalism! Really, you know! Still, Rosebery had not said much more than that in his great speech the other day which had been supposed to put the Liberal Party on the map again. John opened the window and peered out into the annihilation of the dank chilly fog. He was hoping that the weather would not be like this for Rose's wedding-day next week.

But the weather was kind. A milky blue morning deepened almost to summer's azure by the time the special train with the wedding-guests had reached Dolby, to drive thence in brakes to Medlicott Hall through a countryside in which only the berries and the plummy clematis in the hedgerows, the red apples in the orchards, and the shorn

fields testified to the year's age, so green was still the foliage, so benignly warm the fragrant air

The church in Paxford was full, and John who was still young enough to feel embarrassed by a crowd was glad to catch sight of Tom Pownall who was acting as an usher and to be squeezed by him into a corner near one of the Medlicott tombs the effigies and cherubs of which usually occupied the north transept in exclusive dignity, the normal congregation being accommodated in the nave. The family pew of the Medlicotts, a pompous affair with Jacobean panelling, damasked armchairs, and immense lop-eared hassocks almost filled the south transept. From a gathering of the nearest Medlicott and Trotton relations Ann caught sight of John and waved. She was wearing a smart coat and skirt and already she had the air of being Miss Medlicott of Medlicott Hall instead of Rose's young sister Ann.

The atmosphere was heavy with the scent of flowers and moistened asparagus fern which mingled with the feminine silks and taffetas and the ecclesiastical mustiness compounded of damp stone, mildewed leather, ancient wood, and well-soaped choirboys. The village organist was letting himself go with the *vox humana* and not neglecting the *vox angelica*. There was a rustle and a shuffle. Rose in her veil and wreath of orange blossom carrying a bouquet of snowy Frau Karl Drushki roses was coming up the aisle on the arm of her father whose countenance against the whiteness of herself was vivid as burgundy. The four bridesmaids, none of whom John recognized, were dressed in a pastel shade of rose, carried bouquets of La France roses, and wore the pendants of pink topaz which had been the bridegroom's gift to them.

It was his failure to recognize any of the bridesmaids which first brought home to John how far he had been driven out of Rose's life. Looking round the church and noticing the familiar figures of brother officers, of various county celebrities, of Mr and Mrs Damson, of Dr and Mrs Meade, of Rose's mother and father and sister and brothers, he had felt himself being drawn back again into this green world of the English countryside in which he had planned to live for ever tranquilly with Rose, noting the day the cuckoo came, the day the swallow departed as famous occasions in the annals of a year. The sight of Henry Falconer in a frock-coat waiting for the bride had hardly disturbed that sweet recessive motion back into a dream. And then those four debonair bridesmaids, all intimate friends of Rose and all unknown to him, had snatched him back to wakeful reality.

In that unctuous mixture of a bleat and a moo which has become the accepted tone in which an Anglican parson indicates that he is uttering a religious formula expressed in rhythmical prose the Vicar of Paxford was asking the solemn questions of bridegroom and bride in turn, and from where he was sitting John could hear Henry Falconer declare

"I Henry take thee Rose to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my troth."

The finality of it obliterated all emotion in John and left

him so utterly stunned for a moment that even if Rose's voice plighting her troth had been babbled out as clear as running water instead of being lisped as it were like a faint April wind among the springing grass he would hardly have heard her. Indeed, it was not until the strains of Mendelssohn's Wedding March went gallivanting round the church that he became completely conscious again of what was happening.

On his way across the park he was overtaken by Tom Pownall.

"Yes, I think Henry and Rosie have both done deuced well for themselves," Pownall said. "Have you been having a good time since Aldershot? You went to Poland, did you? Rather a queer lot over there, aren't they? I've had some good days with the partridges. The coveys have been really good this year, and by Jove it was hot at the beginning of the month. Shall we see much of you this autumn? Going to resign your commission? That's rather a bad egg after getting through at Chelsea. You might put your drills in with the Oxforas."

John could not be bothered to explain why the scarlet of the Loamshires no longer attracted him.

"Yes, I might do that," he agreed.

He was thinking now that in a few moments he would have to congratulate the bride and bridegroom. In which room would they be standing? Probably in that long library with the oriel windows looking out upon the lawns where he had first seen her gathering daffodils by the moonshine of last March. His guess was right. And as he made his way through the people to where she and Henry Falconer were standing together at the far end he was aware that the long border at one side of the great lawn

was now full of Michaelmas daisies, flowers associated since childhood with the end of happy hours

"John, how sweet of you to come to-day"

And when she suddenly bent forward and gave him her cheek to kiss he apprehended once and for ever that she was married to somebody else. She seemed already five years older than on that night of May five months ago. He stammered out the conventional wishes for happiness, grasped Henry Falconer's hand, and was saved from wondering what he should say next by the press of people behind moving up to congratulate the bride and bridegroom.

That night he went with Elise to a Promenade Concert at the Queen's Hall. A young English pianist in whom a friend of hers was interested was playing Brahms's Concerto in D minor. John was particularly anxious to hear this work, because on that night in Cracow Miriam had told him that the first movement of it expressed for her more perfectly than any piece of music the struggle in her mind over surrendering to the ecstasy of that night and that the *adagio* of the second movement would never be heard by her without remembering with a warmth of passionate gratitude the tranquillity which had been granted to her by that surrender. John was not hopeful of gaining from the first hearing of a piano concerto what Miriam read into it for herself, but he did not want to miss the opportunity of trying to get somewhere on the way into the heart of music, and after the wedding of Rose he desired to be reminded of Miriam. Whether he could follow the concerto or not, it would evoke that night in Cracow and that broken trumpet call, which for him was the symbol of his emotional life up to the present.

They sat in the front row on the left side of the circle, looking down on a scene which was to be perhaps the most changeless scene in year after changing year of this mutable century just over nine months old. John could not make much of the *maestoso* of the first movement. He was willing to believe that it could stand for the struggle of the mind, but he felt that its expression of such a struggle was revealed to him by his own struggle to make out what it was all about. However, when the *maestoso* gave way to the *adagio* of the second movement he suddenly seemed to understand the music. At least, he had no difficulty whatever in putting himself into perfect accord with this mood. He was holding Miriam in his arms once more, as he had held her on that night in Cracow, and in the intensity of their nearness to each other fancying he could see her deep eyes glowing through the dark when her voice confided to him the treasures of an unlocked heart. Her hands had not caressed his cheeks less tenderly than the pianist now touched the keys of his instrument. The green-shaded lamps over the orchestra became a tree-top in which the piano was rocked like a cradle by the dreamy melody. It seemed sometimes as if the soloist must fall asleep at his playing and be borne away into the haze of tobacco-smoke above the white-faced crowded listeners in the promenade, as if the violins and violas and violoncellos would sink back into oblivion drowsed by their own playing, as if even Mr Henry Wood himself must presently lay down his baton and swoon away into a trance.

"This is most lovely," he whispered to Elise.

"It is the very spirit of peace," she whispered back.

John's attention wandered from the concerto during

the vigorous third movement. He studied the programme instead, and found that the next item was a symphonic poem called *The Swan of Tuonela* by a Finnish composer whose name, Sibelius, he heard for the first time. The black swan singing on a northern variant of the Stygian stream sounded promising, but he had been disappointed once or twice by symphonic poems, and he was not over optimistic about fitting the music to the words of the programme.

John bothered neither about sombre bird nor dark lake nor the misty northern hell when the music began. He was carried back by it to Sutherland. He heard the ancestral voices prophesying war. The shaded lamps, no longer a tree-top, were now the green waves breaking upon Sandwater Bay, wherein the orchestra swayed like a mass of tangle, and Queen's Hall itself turned stark and lonely and stern as one of the mighty hills of Assynt.

But when his spirit was back in Assynt the song of the bird became as clear to him as if his ears had been opened by enchantment. 'You shall go back ultimately', sang the dark swan of Tuonela, sang that dark swan while the waters of the mere swept by the north wind nagged at the shore. 'There lies the fulfilment of your weird. To my calling you shall come at last. Go southward now away from me, if you will, but my calling shall bring you back, however many heedless years may surge between. Mine, mine is the voice you shall one day hear above all those surging years,' sang the dark swan of Tuonela, and dabbling its beak among the sparse rushes of that northern mere the sombre bird was silent.

It was with the profoundest indignation that John came

back from the music to find that the audience was applauding it

"Well, I don't want to be one of your subjective people, and attach too extreme a general importance to my own feelings," he told Elise "But you know I lived all my life from birth to death during that piece of music I do wish those people in the promenade would keep quiet What *are* they clapping anyway?"

"The performance of an impressive work by a composer who is hardly at all known in this country "

"Yes, how stupid of me! I hadn't thought of it like that I was thinking for the moment that everybody in Queen's Hall must be going through exactly what I was going through while *The Swan of Tuonela* was being played You know, it's really a very good thing I didn't marry Rose to-day, because if we were married now and if I had heard those sublime drum-beats to-night I should have known that sooner or later daffodils and the green world they live in would not be enough I say, do you want to hear the rest of the programme?"

"Not a bit "

"Then let's go," John said

